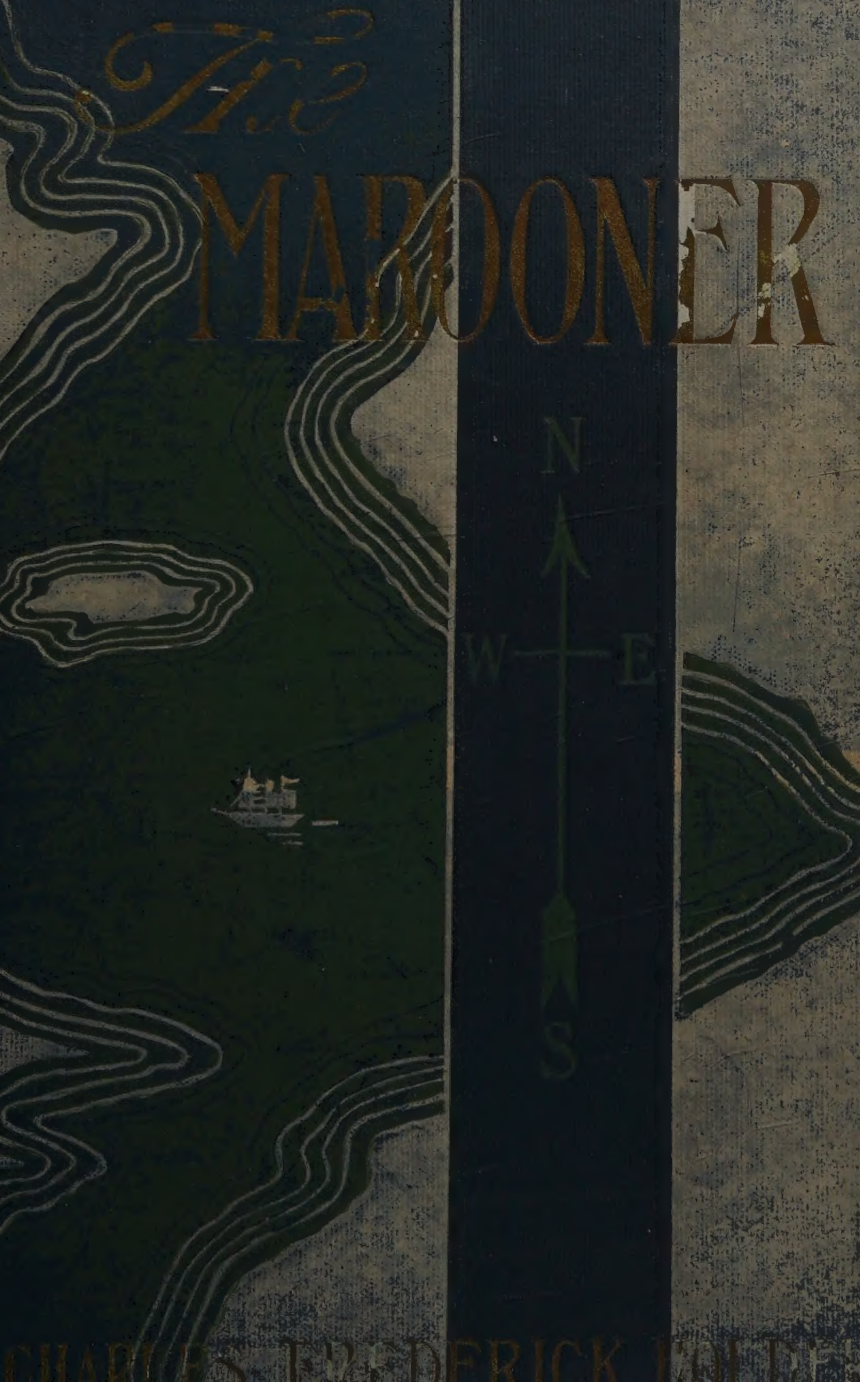
The MAROONER



CHARLES FREDERICK HOLDER

F. J. Wood

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THE MAROONER

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BY

CHARLES FREDERICK HOLDER

AUTHOR OF "BIG GAME AT SEA," "THE LOG OF A SEA ANGLER," "LIFE IN THE OPEN," "CLANCY," "LIFE OF CHARLES DARWIN," ETC.

NEW YORK
B. W. DODGE & COMPANY
1908

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Printed in the United States of America

TO THE MIDSHIPMEN, SHIPMATES OF THE AUTHOR,
WHO THRASHED OUT THE HURRICANE OF
SEPTEMBER, 1869, ON THE STAUNCH
OLD FRIGATE "DALE," THIS
YARN OF THE SEA IS
DEDICATED

PREFACE

HAVING known many wreckers on the outer reef, good men and true, whose lives were continual risks to save others in the days when clipper ships were supreme, I feel it incumbent to say, that in the shaking out of reefs, and the reaches to windward, of this yarn of the sea, the characters are purely fiction, and relate in no way to men, living or dead, known to me. Yet some of the incidents of the story as they relate to the wrecking business of half a century ago, more or less, have some precedent in presumable fact.

As an illustration, on as fair a day as the sun ever shone upon, I saw a prototype of the *Daniel Kelton* run upon a coral reef in the Mexican Gulf no one but a blind man could fail to see, and but a few hours later a line of wreckers hove in sight headed to the west. It was impossible for a boat to have carried the information to Key West or Havana in so short a time. There may have been mental telepathy in those days, but Marconi was unborn, and the assumption, rightfully or wrongfully, was held, that some prearranged plan to wreck the ship for the salvage was being carried out. Some of the seemingly

impossible (to landsmen) sea situations were observed by me, as catching the royal-yard in a gale on an old-time frigate on which I was a midshipman. The wreck of the old ship that came across the barrier reef, as described in chapter twenty-four, or its type, was known and visited by me for years, and in photographs taken as late as 1867 of Garden Key it was still to be seen. The channel through which the pilots of "Riker's Reef" reached the open gulf through the barrier reef had its prototype in the "five foot" of the Tortugas barrier, over which an old wrecker and pilot, one Bob Rand, as brave a man as ever reefed a topsail, took me in 1862, in a literal hurricane. It is sad to contemplate the passing of the American sailing ship and its substitute, the "tramp steamer." The American seaman as a type was courageous and patriotic, and a full-rigged ship under full sail is too splendid a creation to be allowed to pass from the seas. No stronger patriotic lesson could be given the rising generation than for the Government to keep some of the old-line frigates like the *Dale, Constitution,* or others, on which I once had the honour of serving as midshipman, in commission in the great harbours of the land.

C. F. H.

PASADENA, CAL.

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THE MAROONER

CHAPTER I

AN OCEAN MYSTERY

THE clipper ship *Daniel Kelton,* Lloyds A 1, was making a long reach to the southwest. You can see the entry in her log to-day in the marine museum of Chelsea, where it was placed to substantiate one of the most remarkable and unexplainable mysteries of the sea. She was outward bound from New Orleans with a load of cotton consigned to Messrs. Dureieux et Cie of Liverpool, her owners, and was then to return to New York. She was three days out, and had been pounding against a heavy sea and a head wind, the kind of sea that suggests a gale somewhere far away down on the Spanish main, the sea being far too heavy for the wind. The port watch had just come on deck, and the boatswain struck six bells and walked over to the weather-stays, where the mate was standing looking aloft. The wind had been increasing gradually for two hours; the barometer was slowly dropping, and the new watch took the ship with everything

snug; the old-fashioned topsails double-reefed, the big fore and mainsails stretched to the limit, the reefing points tapping, and a hard, live wind, humming a requiem of the sea through the shrouds and top-hamper, that told of heavy weather, storm and disaster to the ill-prepared.

"Barometer's dropped a p'int in ten minutes, sir," said the mate, a Gloucester man named Rowlins, "and I reckon we're going to get it. See how it's darkening up? Why—"

Darkening, indeed! Night deep and dark seemed suddenly flying on to them over the edge of the world; and leaping to the mizzen-chains and clinging to the backstays, the mate screamed:

"All hands on deck; reduce sail! Tumble up for your lives!"

Indistinct, frouselled forms, some in oilskins, some bareheaded, some half-naked, just from bilge-smelling berths, poured out of the dark and cavernous forecastle, and spread out on deck to see coming over the amber surface of the Mexican Gulf a wall of peculiar white spumelike cloud, ominous, terrifying, like some titanic menace bearing down upon its prey.

"Lay aloft!" came the voice of the mate above the roar and howling of the wind. And up sprang the men, climbing into the heavens.

"Hard starboard!"

"Hard starboard, sir," answered the helmsmen, swinging the wheel over and catching a turn about the spokes.

"Keep her shaking!" shouted the captain, who came on deck and took charge. "Ease her; ease her up! So; port!"

"Port, sir."

"When it hits her, shove her up into it."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The wind had increased to a hurricane. It blew the clouds so low that they cut along the royal-yards and hid them from sight, and the spray and spume—the tops of waves—were torn away and hurled through the air to the screaming of the cordage. It grew darker with appalling rapidity, and the black, white and amber cloud came down on them like an avenging spirit.

Order after order rang from the mate. The men edged out on the fore- and main-topsail-yard foot-ropes, clinging, beaten by the wind, to the lifts and braces, gathered in the beating, roaring, bellowing sail, and performed the impossible, furling the fore- and main-topsails in a virtual hurricane; reefing points beating against their faces; beaten flat, buffeted by the smothering spume and blinded by the terrible darkness. As a flash of lightning illumined the rigging, old John Daly was seen in the sulphurous glare shaking his fist at the gale, defying the elements —damning everything.[1]

[1] A rash, unusual defy for a sailor, seemingly irrational, but seen by the author, who, as a midshipman, was furling sail on the mainroyal-yard of a frigate with an old and utterly reckless sailor of the old school.

When the squall struck her, the ship seemed to gradually go over until the lee main-yards hit the water, but she came up into the wind, the spanker acting for a few seconds, then blew away. So fearful was the wind that the men were beaten against yards and in the top; then the mainroyal blew out of the gaskets and carried the yard with it, the latter swinging by the backstay out over the water, dragging a long lift. When the ship righted, as she slowly did, the men lay down; some sliding down the backstays, some the halyards, reaching the deck, as the mizzenstaysail was broken out, to pull her up into the wind. For a few moments the ship lay in the trough of the sea rolling, fore and main-yards under, men holding on to life-lines, the deck buried under tons of water. All the time, at every swing, the terrible pendulum of a royal-yard went across the deck and out, carrying away the intervening stays.

"Get that lift!" screamed the mate, who was lashed in the main-chains.

It was seemingly sure death, but as the deadly yard swung to port, dragging the lift, Johnny Daly leaped for it, caught the lift, and went whirling through the air fifty feet out over the raging waters. As he came back, a dozen men caught him; by a miracle they dodged the yard and made it fast. The ship slowly came up into the wind, faced the hurricane and threw off the seas like a living thing. The wind moaned, a

deep, uncanny, interminable sound; each brace, lift and halyard being the string of an æolian harp which played a requiem attuned to death and despair.[1]

"Bully for you, lads!" screamed the captain, who was lashed to the bitts. "All there, Dave?"

"Every mother's son, sir," shouted the mate, working up to him along a life-line.

"Thank God for that!"

The ship was well on the wind, staggering on under almost bare poles, rolling heavily, while the sea and sky were frightful to contemplate.

"That was a narrow squeak!" shouted the captain.

"It was that, sir. I was afeared it would take her aback, and she'd get in irons. The wind's hauling around like a top."

"I've never seen a squall come up as quick as that."

"Sail—o-o-o!" cried the lookout.

"Where away?" answered the mate; then seeing something, he sprang to the wheel, pushed the man aside and gave it a whirl.

"Aboard of us, by G—!" cried the captain.

"Stand by, all hands!" shouted the mate.

The men sprang to the rigging; and the ship, yawning, plunging, fell away just enough to escape a big ship that came flying out of the storm to windward, foresail, mainsail, staysails set.

[1]This seemingly impossible feat the author saw a midshipman shipmate perform during a cyclone in an old-time frigate.

So close did the passing ship come to the *Kelton* that her main-yard overhung the deck as she went by, and the slosh of the sea between the two hulls was shot into the air, a great flocculent mass of spume as high as the topmast. The ship was slowly brought up into the wind, and was laid-to under the slightest possible sail. The skipper was not superstitious, but he never took chances, and that was the reason his men all liked him.

"My God! did you see that, sir?" cried the mate.

"I'm not blind," replied the captain. "We've touched elbows with Davy Jones twice within ten minutes."

"I mean her decks, sir," said the mate.

"What was the matter with them?"

"Not a man on deck; no one at the wheel."

"What?" shouted the skipper through the wind, looking at the first officer sharply to see what the trouble was—perhaps his nerves had been shaken, or he was drunk. But the mate was sober and had himself well in hand.

"I tell you, sir, there wasn't a man on the deck of that ship. Hoffner," cried the mate to one of the watch clinging to the shrouds, "did you see anything peculiar about that ship?"

"There wasn't a soul aboard of her, sir," replied the man, edging along to him.

"Are you sure?" asked the captain. "Why,

it's impossible; call the men aft, and tell the steward to serve extra grog."

When the men reached the quarter-deck and had been served, the mate said:

"Lads, who among you caught a glimpse of that hooker's deck as she went by?"

Four men stepped out, hanging to the long life-line stretched along the deck—Aleck Hoffner, John Daly, Pete Olsen and Richard Swenson—all old sailors whom the skipper had known for years.

"Did you see anything peculiar about her?" asked the captain.

"Aye, sir," answered Olsen; "we all see there was no one aboard; no one at the wheel."

"That's all," said the skipper, and the men of the watch crept forward along the life-lines, while the captain and mate stood near the two helmsmen and watched the labouring vessel.

The wind gradually went down and at eight bells the captain gave orders to put the ship about. She fell away on her course, and as morning broke the watch shook out the fore and mainsails; then the topsails were added, and by seven bells the following day a big black mass of cloud lay far astern and the ship was flying along with the royals set and a bone in her teeth.

At four bells the starboard watch came on deck, and the last stroke of the bell had not died away before "Ship ahoy!" was heard from the lookout.

"Where away?" shouted the officer of the deck.

"Dead ahead, sir; full-rigged ship, sir."

The wind was failing rapidly, but it held for another hour, when the vessel was within two miles of a large ship, apparently with sails furled and at anchor in the Gulf.

"She can't be hove-to; she has no sail," said the captain. "What d'ye make of it?" and he handed the first officer the glass.

The mate looked for a moment, then walked to the rail and steadied the long glass over a ratline.

"It's the full-rigger we saw yesterday. I know her by the spanker-boom—it's even with her taff-rail; been broken or sawed off for some reason. Her sails have been blown from the bolts and gaskets, and she's adrift."

"The ship that went by with no one on deck?" asked the captain.

"Sure as you're on deck, sir. I'll swear to it."

The *Kelton* was creeping slowly on towards the stranger, and helped by a fresh breeze which sprang up, they soon picked up on her, the men crowding to the forecastle deck and looking with ill-concealed apprehension at the strange craft. Some thought her the *Flying Dutchman,* and Olsen swore she was.

"Did you ever hear of the *Flyin' Dutchman* layin'-to like a bloomin' lightship? She may have been flyin' last night. God knows she lit

by us in great shape; but she's dead to rights now," said Daly.

The man at the wheel, under the captain's direction, brought the ship up on her lee not two hundred yards away, laid her to, and ordered the boat.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said the boatswain, "but the men object to going aboard of her."

"Oh, they do, do they?' replied the skipper, staring at the man; then adding under his breath: "I'm damned if I blame 'em. If there is a man aboard who isn't a coward," he cried, "tumble in there; I'll row him over."

The whole crew started, but the skipper picked two men, who with him got into the cutter and were lowered away, coming down with a crash. The blocks and tackle were tossed off, and they were soon speeding towards the ship—as fine a clipper as ever floated. As they came alongside, the captain sang out:

"Way enough"; and then as they drifted on her quarter, he shouted: "Ship ahoy!" and again, "Ship ahoy!"

The men gazed at the rail for a moment, but not a sound, except the flicking of some gaskets against the yards, came back.

"Ahoy, there!" again shouted the captain, standing up and staring at the ship, astonishment depicted on every feature. No answer came.

"Give way slow, men," he ordered; "we'll row around her."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said the stroke, "but her people may have died with cholera or ship fever."

"Maybe," replied the captain; "but I don't believe it. Steady!"

The cutter drifted under her bow.

"She's had a fine figure-head—a big woman or something," mused the captain, pointing to the place above the cut-water; "but either a sea has carried it away, or it's been unshipped or knocked out. Hawse-hole fresh painted—never used; she's outward bound, I'll swear to that."

The boat now passed under the stern and they saw that the name and gold ornamentation had been worn or knocked off, all but two letters—an A and an E. A rope hung down and swung as the vessel rolled; the men made the painter fast to it and the captain climbed up, followed by the bowman, the other tending the boat. The men found themselves on the deck of a fine, apparently new, clipper ship. Every rag of sail had been blown away, but beyond the splitting of the maintopgallantmast, and the breaking of the ropes, halyards, sheets, topping lifts and stays, she appeared to be in perfect condition. The binnacle was in place, the helm lashed well to port, the cabin door was closed, not locked, but they passed it and walked forward. The galley was in confusion, but this was easily explained by the storm, as the ship had doubtless been on her beam-ends and had righted when

her sails blew away. The coffee-pot was full and wedged in behind the stove. A big square dish of well-browned scouse stood on the floor, and when the captain thrust his finger into it, he saw that it was fresh. In another pan were the wardroom biscuits, soft, not twenty-four hours old—any landsman would have seen that.

"They were cooked day before yesterday, Daly," said the captain, pulling one apart.

"Biscuits for breakfast for the wardroom, scouse for the forecastle," said Daly to himself; "same everywhere—dead or alive." Then opening the door of the oven, he pulled out a pot of beans untouched. "Something happened just before breakfast, sir."

They walked forward and found the companionway, and both hesitated.

"Below there!" sang out the captain, glancing into the dark, bilge-smelling hole; but the only answer was the swinging of cordage, the slosh of seas that came up the hawse-hole or against the vessel's sides.

The captain went down like a landsman, face front, followed by Daly, belaying pin in hand.

"Deserted, by George! But for what?"

The two men looked at each other. The forecastle was typical of that of any ship of the time, dirty, foul, smelling of bilge, cockroaches and tar. The bunks were filled with bedding and bags of clothes, and boxes were lying about just as though the men were on deck. The captain

and Daly went on deck again and opened the door of the companionway, which had been pushed-to, and again the captain sang out:

"Below there!" to be unanswered.

Slowly they descended, stopping at the foot of the companionway. The cabin was handsome and commodious, long and wide, two staterooms leading off from each side, and around it was a cushioned seat. In the centre stood a table which had evidently been set by the steward for breakfast. The racks were in place, but the dishes, the food—from butter and biscuits to pork and beans—were strewn over the floor with cushions and overturned chairs. The men pushed open what was evidently the captain's stateroom. The bunk had been occupied, the pillow being indented, the clothes thrown aside; brushes and combs were on the floor and clothes were lying about. Next to this was another stateroom, evidently a woman's, as female apparel hung from nails behind a linen curtain, and on the floor were silver toilet articles. It was not the room of the wife of a sailing-master, but that of some woman of fashion who may have been a passenger. Her toilet articles had been tossed about when the ship went on her beam-ends before her sails were carried away, but there was not the slightest evidence to indicate that any preparations for leaving the ship had been made. The woman might have gone on deck for some inno-

cent purpose, and doubtless had never returned; and this was the story told by the ship.

The room of the first officer was opposite this stateroom, and here everything was undisturbed other than by the sea. Indeed, so marked was this, so deep the mystery, so illimitable the possibilities as to what happened to the crew—to take every man on deck or below and leave the ship sound and dry under sail on her course, that the men stood and looked at each other.

"Johnny, you look white," said the captain.

"I feel so, sir," answered the man, trying to grin, but failing dismally. "What d'ye think, sir?"

"I don't know what to think," said the captain, taking off his cap and mopping his face; "it's awful. Something happened to call every man and the woman on deck just before breakfast; and whatever it was, or whatever happened, the ship sailed on without a living soul on her."

The two men, who had faced a thousand dangers at sea, were fast losing their nerve; that is, they had had enough of it.

"We must find out who she is, if possible—begin on the luggage," said the captain.

They examined bags, boxes, trunks and cases, but not a scrap of paper, not a letter was found, to throw any light on the ship—what she was, or where she came from. The only object of any interest was a daguerreotype of a beautiful, in-

deed, regal-looking woman, and child, which the captain found in a small box in the lady's state-room; but there was no mark on it, no line, to tell who she was, or where the picture was taken, and it was months later that a name was found behind the picture—the name of a man who could give no information.

"A curious go, sir," said Daly.

"Strange, indeed," responded the captain.

"The log's gone—the ship's just as they left her; but she's been ransacked for anything that might tell her story. Even the number of the compass is rubbed out; there isn't a sign or a figure on the whole ship to connect her with any country; but she's English build—I'd swear to that. The crew—God help them!—were on her forty-eight hours ago. The men were holy-stoning, perhaps, as you may have noticed the shoes are all in the forecastle, when something happened, and every mother's son, from the cook to the skipper's wife, was——"

"Was what, sir?" asked Daly, staring at the captain with horror in his eye, as he hesitated. Daly was a brave man, but he was superstitious.

"I give it up," was the reply. "They wasn't killed here; the ship didn't go over; her pumps are dry. They jest disappeared."

They now went on deck again and broke into the main hatch to find the ship was loaded with kegs.

"Nails, I reckon," said the skipper; "but we'll

bust one for luck." Henly, who had now left the boat and come aboard, found an axe with which he split open the keg.

"Rocks—ballast, by jingo!" cried the captain. "Come, Henly, you've been to sea near thirty years, to my knowledge; did you ever hear of ballast being packed away in kegs like nails?"

"I never did, sir," said Henly, the picture of astonishment. "Perhaps it's ore," said Daly.

"Ore, nothin'," replied the captain; "jest plain beach pebbles—ballast. Well, I'm damned!"

"Yes, sir," replied Henly, and Daly also agreed.

Climbing on deck, they replaced the hatch, closed the forecastle and cabin doors as they had found them, dropped into the boat, and rowed away.

Captain Redmond had but one set of sails, and needed that. They were three hundred miles from port, and the strange ship did not have a rag aboard of her. She represented a fortune as she stood, in salvage, but they could not tow her. The captain could not put a crew on her even had she sails; there was not a man on the *Kelton* who would have shipped on this weird craft, which floated perfectly equipped with everything a sailor needed except sails—provisions, water, clothing—yet for some reason, no one would take or touch anything. Some curse seemed to hang over the great ship. They did not even fire her, which they should have done

as a derelict. So she was left floating on the green waters of the Gulf, rising on the heavy swell, with the brilliant vermilion light of a semi-tropic sunset behind her bringing out the yards and cordage in lines of gold.

The men rowed slowly away, and, as they neared their own vessel, the captain saw a signal to come aboard.

"Give way, lads, we're wanted."

The men glanced around and saw a flag fast to the mizzen-shrouds; then the captain caught a measured clanking sound and started to his feet, crying:

"They've manned the pumps."

"What's the matter, Dave?" cried the skipper as he stepped on board.

"When you left I thought I'd sound the pumps, and I found three feet of water in the hold."

"Three feet of water in our hold," repeated the captain.

"Yes, sir; and the carpenter is down in the ballast trying to find it. She's opened a seam, I reckon."

The captain nodded to the mate to follow him, and walked into the cabin, having given orders to the second mate to get under way. Dropping into a seat he slammed his hand on to the table and said:

"Dave, I'm damned if something isn't all wrong with us. I've been to sea all my life," he said, "but I never felt so queer as I

did going on that ship. I'd given half my interest if I hadn't seen her—I can't get it out of my head. If they'd had fever, why, they'd have been lying around dead; but something took that crew and woman. It took twenty to keep her in trim, and wiped 'em out like you would a fly with your thumb. I saw the woman's clothes on the hook—she'd never left them if it hadn't been something sudden, eh?"

"D'ye know what old Olsen says it was?" asked the officer.

"What?"

"Them heathen Norwegians believe there's a devil-fish in the ocean that can haul down a ship; one of their old books is by a bishop who saw one. Olsen believes that a devil-fish with arms a hundred and fifty feet long fastened itself on the bottom of the ship and sent its arms all over her, picking them up one by one."

"That won't work," retorted the captain. "If a man had stayed below, or in a stateroom, a devil-fish couldn't reach him. It was something else."

"But what?" queried the mate.

What the captain's answer might have been was destined never to be known, as from forward came a long shrill cry: "Sail—o-o-o-o!" that brought every one of the nerve-strung crew, including captain and mate, on deck.

CHAPTER II

THE LURE OF THE LORELEI

Baptiste and the angler were wading down a little trout stream of Charlevoix, that, born high in the Laurentian hills, went swirling on over archæan rocks, a living, vibrant thing, foaming capriciously at times, as though resenting obstruction, then gliding silently through open clearings where wild flowers nodded on its banks, and brakes and ferns were reflected in its clear icy waters. Now it passed into the dark shades of a pine forest, where the wind caressed a thousand harps of myriad strings, whose strange music rose and fell, to die away like the waves of a summer sea. then to come again and again, filling the air with melody.

The angler was casting here and there, now into some purling riffle where matchless tints quivered in the elusive light, or again beneath some overhanging mass of verdure whose branches, weighted with bloom, cast dark shadows of mystery, telling of the river people, of the Montagnais, people of the lands beneath the running sombre waters. Along the bank, following with

soft deer-like tread and watchful eye, was the guide Baptiste, a youth who knew every trout and salmon stream from the point of Vasulon to Tadousac, and far beyond, where the river widened into the sea.

When the angler stopped, he held his breath, every muscle, every nerve alive, vibrant in appreciation of the grace, skill, and complete mastery of the rod. At the entrance to a stretch of pines the angler made a long cast; the current caught the fly, bore it on for a few seconds, then the line straightened out, the slender rod bent fiercely, the reel spoke and sang a brazen canzonet as the game was on. Now downstream in a splendid bound, *z-e-e-e-e-e-e-e,* upstream, zigzagging across, dashing through riffles, clouds of spray, to come into the deep pool, always fighting—then a slack line.

"Ah, mon Dieu! m'sieu', he ees away; the river folk have brak your line"; and Baptiste, swinging his pack to the ground, tossed the net upon it in despair.

"The river folk," said the angler, laughingly coming ashore, throwing off his click and reeling in the silken line to examine the frayed end. "It may have been river folk, but a taut line against a sharp rock is more like it."

"Yes, m'sieu', that ees the river folk, heem cut it," and the guide's big eyes gleamed as he looked askance at the dark and flowing river, so rich in its deep colours beneath the pines.

"You should have been a Dutchman or a German, Baptiste. I was once canoeing on the Rhine, angling for castles," said his patron, smiling, "when we came to a high cliff somewhere, as I recall it, between St. Goar and Oberwessel; but my guide refused to pass—he would walk around, he would try to fly, but not paddle a canoe by St. Goar—and all on account of a Lorelei, a river siren that lived in the deep dark running water,

'In gulfs enchanted,
Where the siren sings.'

Surely, Baptiste, you have heard at Quebec 'Die Lorelei'?" and the angler sang in a sonorous voice of charming cadence some notes from Mendelssohn's opera.

"No, m'sieu'."

"Ah, then you have something to live for."

"But, m'sieu'," said the boy, "we have Lorelei een Quebec een our mountains. I have often seen them like shadows, blue, like the sapphire, but you go on, and so do they. They leeve at night in the deep water of the river, and at day float up the gorge into the mountains—bands, flocks, mille thousan'—yes, m'sieu', but you can never reach or touch them. You know why, m'sieu'? Wan time long ago a man caught a Lorelei. He swear he love her, but he forget—he lef her die; an' now they ev' beyon' hees reach."

The angler laughed again. "Ah, Baptiste, you

should be the artist and I the guide; you have the imagination."

"Yes, m'sieu', but eet is not imagination. I haf seen the Lorelei, these pale-blue forms, float een in the air. I can show m'sieu' to them. When? Now, m'sieu'."

"Give me my hunting shoes," said the angler, holding up his leg that the boy might pull off the long rubber wading boots. "Pack them and the rod and get out the colours. We will stop fishing and paint Lorelei."

The boy stared at his patron in blank amazement for a second, then did as he was told; and when they were equipped for walking, the angler said: "Which way?"

"For the Lorelei, m'sieu'?" asked Baptiste.

"Yes, certainly," was the reply.

"But you can nev' get to heem; you see heem—that is all, m'sieu'."

"I remember, Baptiste, you told me I would see a big trout in the pool of San Ovier, but would not land it. What happened?"

"You land it, m'sieu'," said the boy; "but this was fish."

"It is all the same to me," retorted the laughing angler, who was always laughing. "If I can only see these Lorelei I will reach them."

The boy looked at the big American in wonder, then threw his pack upon his shoulders and led the way into the deep gloom of the pines. They crossed and recrossed the stream, coming out

into the sunlit pastures filled with flowers, where the light played joyously and the air was full of the incense of nature, the resinous tang of the pine, the soft perfume of blossoms, the fragrance of bush and bough, of trampled wood and crushed leaves, a brew for the gods, that filled the nostrils and made the heart beat strong in love of the wild, the uncontaminated in nature.

Across the wild garden they walked, ever rising, now entering a belt of pines, again lost in deep shadows, while the needles tossed incense into the air at every step. As the river wind came soughing by, the angler stopped to listen as it sang and sobbed.

"What does it say to you, m'sieu'?" asked the boy, as the sound swept on and on.

"To me?" said the angler. "Why, I see the distant sea, its waves beating on cruel rocks. I see the sea rise higher and higher; its roar increases as it comes piling in. I see the crest combing, breaking on the sand. I see white sails torn, faces of dead women and children. Now it passes, is far away, the moan, the plaint of the deep sea. And you, Baptiste, what do you see?"

"I, m'sieu'? I see the Lorelei. Look, m'sieu', look!"

The boy whirled about. They had been climbing the slopes of the Laurentian hills, whose titanic arms reached down to the great river of the north; and as the angler followed the direc-

tion of the gesture he saw through the trees range after range of the mountains that extended back from the St. Lawrence between Quebec and the land of Tadousac. They came down like great serpents to drink, and the green ridges could be counted as far as the eye could reach; and at the base of each, reaching up and blending with the emerald tones, a blue so deep, so rich and clear, so pure and distinct, that one might well believe that a great band of blue from some splendid tourmaline formed the base of each range. The colour was nebulous. It seemed to float in the air, an evanescent mystic irised haze that filled each cañon, gulch or gorge.

For a moment the artist did not speak, and the boy looked with burning eyes upon the scene.

"So this is the Lorelei?"

"Yes, m'sieu'."

"Your Lorelei is a sapphire mountain, Baptiste, a mist of cerulean dreams. By Heaven, I must paint these Lorelei!"

"There they are, floating een the wind, listening to the song of the trees; but you can nev' reach any nearer—you must paint the Lorelei here. So you move, so they pass on before, m'sieu'. They lure you on and on, over hill, mountain, till you die, m'sieu'."

"Well, we will try this lure," rejoined the artist, with a laugh.

"Ah," thought Baptiste in French, "could this good patron ever be serious about any one thing

but fishing? *Saint coeur de Marie!* if he only could!"

That night they camped in the mouth of the little Lauval, where the St. Lawrence is so wide that the few dwellers had never seen or been across. Then taking the canoe they paddled out into the stream and turned down the shore to the east. As the sun rose, Baptiste stopped paddling and they floated on and watched the marvellous coming of the Lorelei from the sea, saw the deep black shadows that had filled the cañons at night slink away, change to purple, fade to green, to violet; and then—then the Lorelei came, faint, nebulous, irised, forms in every gulch and cañon as far as the eye could see. They feasted their eyes on the splendid colour, then paddled on.

"You see, m'sieu'," said Baptiste, after a long silence and continuous work with the paddles, "we have sail five mile. This ees the gulch we see the Lorelei een, but they have escape—they are steel five mile beyon'."

This was true. The beautiful blue bands, the sapphire mist, the irised nebulæ, terms that filled the mind and soul and eyes of the artist, the blue of Labrador, was still just as far ahead and beyond their reach. The river was a disc of steel over which some subtle hand had drawn a lace of old rose, and was a medley of colours that deepened as the sun rose higher and higher. The artist was not satisfied. He had travelled all

over the world, but had never seen a colour like this, had never watched it steal and creep away just like this.

"Baptiste!"

"Oui, m'sieu'."

"Do you see the big grey rock rising out of the blue haze, the Iris hill?"

"The Iris Mountain out of the Lorelei—pardon, m'sieu'?"

"Well, out of the Lorelei, if you wish," said the artist. "It is five, seven, perhaps ten miles distant. I will meet you there. Take the canoe down, make the camp and wait for me in the heart of the blue, while I chase this Lorelei through the forests."

The boy turned the canoe inshore, ran it into a little cove, from which reached away the Laurentides in Charlevoix, packed his master's kit, then stepped into the canoe again and shoved off.

"Adieu, m'sieu'; but you will never overtake the Lorelei."

"Adieu," responded the artist, laughing. "You forget the ounaniche of Robeval that you told me I could not take, and the trout of San Ovier, and——"

"Ah, m'sieu', but this ees not ounaniche—it ees Lorelei. Adieu!"

The artist, angler, dreamer, idealist—what you will—plunged into the deep forest and climbed the ridge of the Laurentian range. An hour later he looked down on miles of country far to the

Chicoutimi. He had left the river far to the right, and before him was the lure, the deep colour at the base of other ranges always miles away. It was not easy work—there was no trail; and he climbed on, crossing turbulent streams, pushing through the bush, and, when night overtook him, he sought the shelter of a big pine and slept in the open. The next morning he travelled on, climbing impossible hills and slopes in the heart of the Laurentides. When he turned he saw, far behind, the irised slopes, the tints of the Lorelei, now following him, and to the north they were all about, but always far away. Fatigue began to tell on him, and on the third day he thought he must have passed the rock, and then suspected that he was lost. Insensibly he had turned away from the water, so now he began to follow a small stream downward that must in time reach the great river. As night came on he climbed the slope of a deep ravine, caught the splendid tints of purple, saw the Lorelei that had lured him on creeping down to the unseen river. Then, out from a little clearing came a gleam of light. Down he plunged, breaking through the brush, stopping as several dogs bounded towards him.

"Est ce que vous, père?" came a soft musical voice from the gloom. "Oh, a stranger! Back! down! Ramon! back, Jean!" and a young girl seized the giant St. Bernards by their collars, one in each hand, and held them back as they growled

ominously—held them, and regarded the stranger in amazement.

"Where did you come from, sir—Chicoutimi?" she asked.

But the apparition so astonished the jaded and worn man that he stood a moment, leaning on his rifle in silence, looking at the girl—looking until a deep glow rose and suffused her face.

"I beg your pardon," he finally said, "but I have been out two or three days and nights. I believe I am lost; I have lost my way. I was following the—— *You* are not the Lorelei, are you?" he said eagerly.

"I?" exclaimed the girl. "No; I am Nœmie. If you are lost come to my father's."

The man was dazed and confused by fatigue, and he gladly followed the girl down into the clearing. As they approached the cabin with its concave roof, a man came out of the forest and, in French, asked the girl who the visitor was.

"A stranger, father, who is lost, who needs shelter."

"H'I spik poor Hinglish," said the man, touching his hat to the artist. "Los', ees dat h'all, m'sieu'? But ma leetle gal, Nœmie, she spik Hinglish. You welcome, m'sieu'. H'I have h'only camp, but you welcome, m'sieu'."

"I am half dead and worn out with fatigue, I must confess. Many thanks. I am a painter," he replied, turning to the girl. "My name is John Duryea. I live in New York. My guide

was to make camp at a point down the river, where I was to join him, but I lost my way. I am very glad to find someone."

"Ma name is Toussaint Réval," said the native. "Ma leetle gal, Nœmie, she half Hinglish. She fix you up, den we 'ave deener. You must be hoffle hungry, m'sieu'."

They went into the cabin, forced Duryea into the only room, gave him a venison dinner, and put him to bed. When he awoke, his breakfast was by the couch, steaming hot. Someone had stepped in and placed it there, then gone out and knocked.

"You feel bet'r after h'eat, das a fac'," said Toussaint. "'Ow you feel, m'sieu'?"

"Better, much better," said Duryea, who could hardly move. But he ate, and as he dressed he saw that the room was of rough tree-trunks, but immaculate. By the bed hung a little silver crucifix, and below it was a well-worn rug where doubtless Nœmie knelt, for it must be her room. As Duryea crawled out, lame and stiff, he found that the father had gone to look at his traps, but the girl Nœmie was there to greet him.

The artist thought he had never seen so beautiful a child or woman. She was almost a pigment of the imagination, and her utter lack of knowledge of her beauty but intensified it. With rich brown hair, the kind that Henner liked to paint, eyes as blue as the Lorelei, dainty hands and fingers, she was a very Naiad of the forest, as she

sat mending a net, and a strange contrast to the old Frenchman—a pure peasant type.

Duryea sat down on a tree-trunk and watched her. Her legs were bare to the knee and brown as the tan of the net she was working on, her arms the same. Her dress, a faded calico, displayed every contour and line of her perfectly developed figure. Duryea could hardly wait to bring out his colour box.

"And do you live here all the time?" he asked, still in English, concealing the fact that he spoke French that he might enjoy the accent and patois of Toussaint.

"Yes," she replied. "My father is a game-keeper, trapper and fisherman. He watches the salmon and game and reports to the government of Quebec. My mother, who is dead, was English," she said softly.

Duryea then told the girl about his work, showed her some of his sketches, and, at night, when Toussaint returned, they sat around the fire and talked of the wild country and its life. The next day Duryea told Nœmie about Baptiste and the Lorelei, and made her laugh by describing his chase of a mere blue, a mere colour.

"My father is just as superstitious," she said. "I have heard of the Lorelei, and I love the deep blue of the gorges, and have often wondered why you could never creep upon it; but it is always stealing on before you. I can show you, if you

wish, a place on the mountain where you have the best view of it, better than from the river."

That afternoon and many more, they climbed the ranges, and then she pointed away to the north, where a score of great rounded dome-like mountains came rolling down, floating in the splendid blue that had lured him on and on. Here he began to paint, to place his colours, and the girl watched and wondered at the tints he evolved and which took form and shape. Duryea was a master of a school that later became known as the Impressionist, and Nœmie never tired of creeping up to the canvas, laughing at its absurdity at close range, then running off and clapping her little hands in delight as the splendid picture materialised.

One day he caught her crying, nor was she ashamed, as some women might have been. She said simply: "It makes me cry, it is so beautiful." And when this masterpiece, which later made the artist famous, was hung in the French Academy, more than one observer turned away, unable to fathom the strange effect the picture, "The Lure of the Lorelei," had upon them.

So the days slipped away, and the two, left alone, wandered over the hills. Duryea taught the girl to cast a fly, and they wandered down the mountain streams and fished the lakes that, like gems, filled the valleys here and there. They climbed over hills and mountains, and Duryea

was lost to the world. Then Nœmie consented to be his subject as he saw her first, and when one day she stole up and glanced at the canvas, the deep warm blood surged into her face.

"Do I look like that?—do you see me so?" with wonder in her voice.

"Yes, I see you so," he replied, smiling.

She turned away and for some reason she would not look at him when he spoke, and made an excuse to go home; and long after the sun began to drop he sat and watched the deep colours fade and deepen to violet and merge into the blackness of night. Then by the light of the moon he slowly walked down the mountain to Nœmie.

One day he showed the picture to Toussaint, who laughed, looked at it, then at Nœmie critically. "H'I think dat hoffle fine; ees like her *mèrc*, she great beauty, belle, das a fac'."

As they talked, Nœmie ran out of the cabin, and Duryea found her by the stream where a clump of slender beeches bent and formed a canopy; saw her, as Narcissus, leaning over, gazing into the mirror of the waters. He held back, pretending not to have seen her at the stream; then they wandered away as Toussaint sang his songs:

"Who passes by the road so gay?
Campagnon de la Marjolaine.
Who passes by the road so gay,
Always gay?"

"You promised to show me the wild forest flowers," said Duryea one day; so they strolled out into the wild country along the little stream, where ragged red flowers flamed and blazed, over fields of closed gentians and yellow jewel-weed. Nœmie showed him little open glades fringed with white, and green stalks of meadow-rue, damp gardens where the violet or purple fleur-de-lis formed banners and crests against the soft green of the forest. She led him to deep glens where the clustering bells of the pyrola rang and chimed and filled the air with their fragrant incense; then far up a portage to masses of fringed orchids, from which they entered the forest, where perfumes of other kinds came with every wind, where cedars, white birches, balsams and spruces held converse in the soft wind, elbowing, crowding, jostling, in every breeze.

"Nœmie," said Duryea, as they sat down to rest on the bank of what she called the Petite Peribonca, a dainty little stream that whispered its way down through the trees—"Nœmie, why do you not look at me any more?" as she dropped her eyes before his. "When I first came you looked at me. Do you know, I have forgotten whether your eyes are violet or blue."

"I don't know," the girl replied, glancing shyly at him.

"I must go back to New York. I must hunt up Baptiste," he said suddenly. "He must think me dead. I have been lost to the world, Nœmie."

The girl turned her head away, and, acting on a sudden impulse, Duryea put his arm about her, and, drawing her to him, saw that her eyes were suffused with tears. "Do you understand, Nœmie? I am going away."

She did not answer for a moment. Her slight figure was trembling, her heart was beating; then she looked up and replied: "I am very sorry; I shall miss you."

"Shall you really miss me?" Duryea persisted, cruelly forcing the sweetest words he had ever heard from her reluctant lips, and looking down into the delicate face, looking deep down into the half frightened, fawn-like eyes. Then the perfume of her breath intoxicated him, and, drawing her slender form to him, he kissed her again and again.

"You will miss me, Nœmie? Are you sure?"

"I shall die when you go," she said, simply placing her hand trustfully in his.

"Will you go with me?" he said, holding her close to his beating heart. "Will you go with me and live with me always, live with me far away from here? I love you, I love you, Nœmie. Do you hear me?"

She turned her face away from his kisses and buried it, in the very shame of loving, on his breast.

Then: "Nœmie, I lak you come hol' de net fo' you fadder; I hav' haxiden' with ma finger," came booming through the trees.

Nœmie tore herself away, and ran down the trail to Toussaint, while Duryea stood and watched her graceful figure until it was lost in the trees, and then it suddenly occurred to him that perhaps she had not understood him. He had said nothing about marriage—his language might have been misunderstood. So, on the impulse of the moment, he turned and ran down the flower-lined trail, with its gentians, its pools of iris, and sprang into the little lodge to find Nœmie binding up her father's hand with a piece of netting.

"Toussaint," he cried, "I love Nœmie. May I marry her? I am rich, I can care for her, and you, too, for that matter."

Toussaint dropped the piece of netting and looked up at the blushing girl.

"Why, m'sieu', you don' know my leetle gal hardly—ees you mak sport wif heem? This hoffle queek. What you say, Nœmie?—what ma leetle gal she say, eh?"

Nœmie tried to escape. But Duryea's arms were about the slender figure, as though he saw her menaced by some evil, passing shade. Her head was on his breast, her pure heart beating against his own.

Toussaint laughed. "Why you ax me? Eet look lak eet all fix hup. Eet's hoffle queek." Then he turned as a shadow crossed the door.

"Pardon, m'sieu'," said Baptiste, taking off his

hat, for it was he. Then he recognised Nœmie in the gloom in his master's arms.

"Pierre!" cried Nœmie.

The boy's face became deadly pale. He staggered back for a moment as though struck, then, jerking a knife from his belt, swung himself at them, and, in blind insatiate fury, struck at Duryea.

The latter swung the girl behind him, and, by a quick and clever move, seized the knife-arm with one hand, his guide's throat with the other, and, with a powerful lift with his knee, literally hurled him, as he would a mad dog, through the air against the log wall, where he fell to the floor, and where Duryea leaped upon him, wringing the knife from his hand, choking him slowly.

"Don't kill him—don't kill him!" cried Nœmie. "It is Pierre."

"Pierre?" said Duryea, jerking the boy to his feet, but not relinquishing his hold upon him. "Pierre!—why, this is my servant, my guide, Baptiste."

"No, m'sieu', he ees Pierre," cried Toussaint.

"*You* call me Baptiste," gasped the half-choked guide; "but I am Pierre. I have love Nœmie all my life. You tak her from me."

"Ah," said Duryea, pushing him violently off against the wall and picking up the knife, "that is it—is it? You are as clever with your knife as you are in your love-making. Out of this quick, or," said Duryea, a yellow, ugly light in

his eye, "I shall forget myself and wring your neck."

The boy was livid, but he did not move. He finally said, raising his hand supplicatingly and covering his face: "I was mad, crazy, I did not know what I was do. I haf love Nœmie all my life. I hoped to marry her some day."

"Did you know this, Nœmie?" asked Duryea, turning to her.

"No, no, m'sieu'," cried Pierre; "I never tol' her. I never dare tell her."

"Is this so, Nœmie?" insisted Duryea.

"Yes," said the girl, looking at the boy with terror in her eyes. "We have been as brother and sister; for five years we have lived here together, but I never knew that he cared for me—that he loved me."

"M'sieu', don' send me off, m'sieu'! I was crazy—I was mad. I will be yo' slave—anything"; and he dropped upon his knees and grasped Duryea's hand. "Don' let him send me away, Nœmie. I was mad"; and the boy burst into an uncontrollable flood of tears.

CHAPTER III

TOUSSAINT WRITES A LETTER

In the early morning Toussaint was abroad, after his custom. The sun was still below the purple hills, and the sparkling frost clung to the trees, reached away on the low-lying verdure, and was crushed beneath his moccasined feet as he strode through the pines. The old trapper made for the little shack where Pierre slept; arriving there, he pushed open the door and stepped softly in, slowly removing his hat at what he saw. The boy, evidently, had not slept. The blankets on his bed were in their place, the pillow uncrushed, and before the little crucifix at the end of the room he lay, his head on his arm, asleep.

Toussaint made a move to retire when the door creaked, and the boy awoke, looked wildly about, and started to his feet, brushing aside his long hair as though to sweep away some bad dream; then seeing Toussaint, he sprang forward and seized his arm.

"Toussaint," he said, "you are all the father

I know, you have been everything to me. Intercede for me with monsieur, convince him that I was mad—out of my mind and heart. It is true that I loved Nœmie a long time. Mon Dieu! who could help it? She is an angel. I have seen her grow, develop from a child. I loved her first as a sister, then—then as a lover; but I felt somehow she was above me. I never had the courage to ask her to be my wife, because I did not believe she loved me other than as a brother. But I could stand it no longer, and that is the reason I left her and you and went up the river. I was going to remain away a few months, thinking that Nœmie perhaps would miss me, and that when I returned I might have the courage to tell her my love, that I might have her as my wife. I met Monsieur Duryea at Bic. He engaged me as a guide and left me to follow the colours of the hills. He did not return, so, thinking that he was lost, I came to you, to get you, Toussaint, to go with me to his rescue; but when I looked in the door, thinking to surprise Nœmie, and saw her in his arms, saw the love and passion in his eyes—mon Dieu! I forgot everything I owed to you, to Nœmie. My eyes got red, I went mad, Toussaint. May the good God forgive me, help me"; and with an impassioned cry the boy fell at the feet of the old trapper, who stood stupefied for a moment, not knowing what to do or say; then stooping to

lay his hand on the boy, he saw Duryea, who had followed him.

"Get up, Pierre," said the latter. "I have heard what you said, and believe you. I can imagine how you feel and am sorry for you; but Nœmie is to be my wife."

The boy rose to his feet, his face almost death-like, his black eyes deep in circles, burning with a consuming fire.

"I understand, m'sieu'," he said. "I have tried to make amends," pointing to the little altar, "and——"

"All right," replied Duryea, pitying the boy and not wishing to further humiliate him. "I overlook it; you can continue in my service if you wish."

"Ah, m'sieu'," cried Pierre, seizing his hand and kissing it fervently, "m'sieu' is too good; but I thank him, I will repay him by faithful service."

"Very well," said Duryea; "after breakfast go back to the camp, pack the things and meet me in Quebec. I will be at this address soon"—handing him a card; "wait for me."

Pierre bowed, and Toussaint and Duryea went out. When they had reached beyond hearing distance Duryea stopped.

"Toussaint, am I a fool?"

"How, m'sieu'?" asked the old man.

"Why, to trust that boy; take him with me. He will either kill me, or be very faithful. I

believe I am taking a great chance, but I know how I have interfered with his life and hopes, and I could hardly resist his begging."

"I don' think you mak meestak, m'sieu'," replied the old man. "Pierre he ees a good boy, vera good, m'sieu'. I neva say to heem, don't; he jes' lak ma son."

"Well," said Duryea, thoughtfully, "Nœmie asked me to forgive him and take him if he wanted to go, and I am really doing it for her. My own judgment would be—well, ah!" and Nœmie, bright as the morning itself, sparkling like some forest flower, with burning cheeks, came forward to be greeted by her lover.

"I have agreed to take him, Nœmie. What a sweet name it is," he said, putting his arm about her, as Toussaint, wise in his generation—if he was an old Canadian trapper—pushed on ahead. "The poor fellow loved you, and I would have to forgive him whether I wished to or not."

"I knew you would," said Nœmie, shyly, "and I know he will be faithful and true."

"My little girl is so world-wise," laughed Duryea, stopping and folding her in his arms. "Is it really true that I have come up into these purple mountains to find a wife? I can't believe my luck."

What Nœmie said was lost, but the colour deepened in her cheeks, and she broke away from him as Toussaint, pretending not to see them, shouted that the bacon was burning—where was

the chef? And so Nœmie ran away, and a few moments later was serving them with the breakfast, after which they planned, Duryea and Toussaint, Nœmie occasionally glancing at her lover, the tide of pink rising, falling, ebbing on her cheek as she caught his eyes and passionate glance.

"I have arranged for Pierre to meet me in Quebec, and I propose that we take two or three days, pack up slowly and then go on," said Duryea. "We can be married there and spend a few days seeing the sights. Toussaint, you must go with us to Quebec, and how would you like to spend the winter there? You see, Nœmie may become homesick or grow tired of me," laughed Duryea. "She would want to see her father, and Quebec would be near New York."

"I do lak you, sa," said Toussaint, "an' what ma leetle gal she lak, I think she miss 'er ol' fadder, eh?"

Nœmie went around to Toussaint, and, as he took her on his knee, she buried her head on his broad shoulder. "I tole ma leetle gal I hol' her until her legs heem touch de flo'—I reckon dey do. Yesterday she was ma leetle gal Nœmie, now she grande dame, a laida, de bud, bloom, blossom. Don' cry, ma leetle gal."

But Nœmie was weeping, and the old man's arms were about her, rocking her to and fro, while Duryea fumbled for a cigar and went out

to light it, feeling something like a murderer—a breaker up of homes, a "sunderer of companies."

They broke camp slowly. Old Toussaint buried some of his valuables in a caché, packing the rest in the roof of his cabin, while the two lovers wandered through the woods and by the little streams that had seen their love-making. He took Nœmie to the hills at evening-time and told her of the Lorelei, how they had led him on to her, and pointed to them as their distant blue shapes formed in the valleys; then Nœmie would sing for him and he would sit entranced, as her splendid bell-like voice rang out and with mellowing notes went echoing down into the cañons, and came rolling back, time and again, the voices of the Lorelei.

"Do you know, Nœmie, that you have a marvellous voice? Where did you learn to sing?" asked Duryea one evening.

"I never did learn," she replied. "I have always loved to sing, and even when a little girl I climbed the hills and sang to hear the voice come back again and again. I fancied that the Lorelei heard and answered me. Listen"—and out from her pure throat came sounds, the very soul of melody, which seemed to steal softly away in the words of an old French story; then stopping suddenly, back from the distant hills came the echoing answer of the Lorelei.

For several days Nœmie and Duryea roamed the forests, then reluctantly tore themselves

away. The horses were brought in one morning by Toussaint, who was a changed and comical figure in his best clothes. Nœmie was mounted on the little Canadian shaggy pony, and they took the trail for the river fifty miles distant.

They had travelled a mile, laughing and joking, in high spirits, when Toussaint suddenly pulled on his horse and stopped with a troubled look.

"What now, Toussaint?" said Duryea. "Has your nag balked already?"

"She is too lazy to even balk," said Nœmie, with a silvery laugh at the hairy nag, down whose sides the long legs of Toussaint hung nearly to the ground.

"No, m'sieu'," answered Toussaint, "eet is not that; she ees oll right; but I haf fergot somesing. I mus' go back with ma leetle gal. M'sieu', wait fo' us."

"All right," replied Duryea.

Nœmie looked astonished at this sudden move, but glanced at her lover and obediently followed the old man as he took the back trail. Toussaint did not speak until they had reached the lodge. He dismounted, unlocked the door, brought down a wooden ink-stand and quill from a big mushroom-like growth which had been nailed against the wall, then said in his native tongue:

"Nœmie, I have an old friend, an old companion I knew many years ago—yes, before you were

born. I have never seen him since, but I forgot when I left that the last thing he said to me——"

"In France?" interrupted Nœmie.

"No," replied Toussaint; "not exactly in France, but near France, near to it."

Nœmie glanced quickly at the perturbed face of the old man and saw that he was struggling with some question or memory which he did not wish to disclose, so she discreetly asked no questions.

"The last thing he said to me," continued Toussaint, "was, 'Toussaint, if you move, leave your address; I may come to see you any time.' Now if my old friend," and Toussaint looked at Nœmie fixedly, "comes and finds me gone, what then—where is my promise?"

"Is that all?" said Nœmie, evidently much relieved. "Why, dear father, leave a letter for him."

"But I cannot write," said Toussaint. "I never wanted to write before, and now I wish to write very much."

"I can write it for you. What is your daughter for, and her education from the Sisters at Tadousac?"

Toussaint did not answer for a moment, then he looked up.

"How can you write a letter when you do not know who it is to go to?"

"But you can tell me," said Nœmie. "Tell me his name."

Toussaint slowly wagged his head back and forth.

"You have forgotten it?" asked Nœmie.

Toussaint wagged his head still more.

"My friend is a very strange man; he would not like me to print his name for every trapper to read as he passed by and perhaps be used as a target by fishermen."

"Oh!" exclaimed Nœmie, "you want a letter written, but no one must know the address?"

"Yes, yes, that is it," responded Toussaint. "Ah, Nœmie, what a bright girl you are! You don't take after your old father. No, no, it is the mother."

"This is very easy," said Nœmie, whose keen perceptions told her that for some good reason her father did not wish her to know who his friend was. "Write on the door, 'Toussaint Réval, address Quebec Post Office'; then if anyone comes to see you they will read this and say, 'Toussaint has gone to his city house; I will send him a letter.'"

"But how will I get the letter if I am away?" and Toussaint raised his eyebrows as though he had Nœmie now.

"Why, my dear daddy, you will tell the postmaster at Quebec to forward your letters to you anywhere."

"Ah, so I thought, so I thought," said Toussaint, patting her on the head. "I wanted to see if you knew."

"More than this," continued Nœmie, "the rain, the snow will wash your letter away in ink. Build a little fire and give me the needle which you used to put the marks on your floats and traps; I will burn it on."

Toussaint looked at her in admiring stupefaction for a moment, then he threw down some pine boughs, got the needle, which was inserted in a long handle, and, when the fire was blazing, held it in the embers until it was hot. Nœmie had found an old white pine board planed smooth, and taking the red-hot needle she wrote or printed in deep, long, black letters:

"Address Toussaint Réval, Quebec Post Office."

Then she read it to him, and, very much delighted, he took it, and, while she went for the pony, nailed the board securely to the big door. Then he stood off and admired it, calling to Nœmie to come and see how fine it looked, the door-plate of Toussaint Réval. A glance showed that he had nailed it upside down, but seeing the satisfaction on his face, and fearing to humiliate him, she said:

"Anyone could read that who could read French," and turned again into the deep forest, followed by the old man, from whose brain a tremendous burden had been removed.

They found Duryea lying on the pine-needles, looking up at the blue sky between the branches, and in a short time had again started on their way. At night they camped, and on the second

day, by easy riding and walking, they made the little town, from which they were rowed to the landing, and in due time boarded the boat for Quebec.

CHAPTER IV

THE ETERNAL PENANCE

PIERRE followed his patron's instructions literally, arranged his pack, and made his way to an address on Le Cap Street, Quebec, given him by a Franciscan father whom he met on the boat; a clean and decent-looking home kept by one Jean Rohar and his wife, who spoke with the patois of Normandy.

He reached the house at night, and was shown to a little room under the roof. Despite all that he could do, Pierre could not tear away the pain that seemed eating into his very vitals. It was insistent, this memory of Nœmie, it took the nature of physical agony. He was feverish, his head hot and lips parched. He threw himself upon the bed, but could not sleep, and time and again he went over the experiences of the past days; his years of love for Nœmie; how he had gradually become possessed with the idea that she was his; how he loved her; how he had led, as it were, this stranger to her; and then, at the very thought, he burst into fierce despair,

paced the little room, and, in the very impotence of his rage, dashed his fist against the wall until it bled.

He had been struck, choked like a dog, kicked by this American; his love, his life taken from him in a night; that love of years which he had nurtured in his heart; his ambitions, his hopes crushed out in that humiliating blow. The blood rushed to his head and filled his eyes, and he cursed his weakness, his resolves to make amends.

He laughed at religion as the idea of revenge crept insidiously into his mind. It must have been some demon, some evil spirit which had followed him, and the more he dwelt upon his misfortune, the wilder became his desire for vengeance. Yet while he was planning some awful revenge, some trick by which he could regain Nœmie, the remembrance of her pure nature would overwhelm him like a tidal wave, the religion of his youth would take possession of his soul and, like a real force in his mind, would seem to sweep the evil thoughts and desires away.

And so, assailed by passion, rent by physical and mental pain, Pierre paced his little room, now throwing himself upon the couch trying to sleep, starting up amid terrible dreams to alternately rave, curse, weep and lose himself in utter despair. More than once he screamed aloud; then as the sky was growing lighter he passed down the stairs, unchained the door and ran out

into the strange street which with Little Champlain, Sault au Matelot and Cul-de-sac, made up one of the most ancient localities of the old city. Pierre felt that he must escape from something—what, he did not know; and a wild desire overtook him to reach the open country, where he could run into the forest and on and on, perhaps to Nœmie.

So he hurried on, passing lonely calèches, the drivers of which hailed him, taking him for a late reveller going home. He walked on by the old church, Notre Dame de Victories, to which he remembered going as a child with his mother; by the old convent of Hôtel Dieu with its high windows, then losing his way, wandered here and there, now along the ramparts of the old battery, throwing himself on the seats, to drop his face in his arms, trying to shut out the horror, the despair of it all. Then he would start to his feet, stung by fresh memories, and walk on and on. Finally he came, by chance, to the St. John's Gate, and seeing the open country, ran until, exhausted, he tripped and fell in the fields, where, perhaps stunned, he lay, to rise later and see the sun staring him in the face.

The sun was just over the house of Toussaint, miles away, and, with fierce imprecations, he shook his clenched hand at it and swore to have the life of Duryea. He would wait until he was married and strike him down in the midst of his happiness; then he would kill them all. And

with a cry like a hunted, stricken animal, almost mad with remorse, he staggered on, not knowing where he was going.

It so happened that Pierre almost ran into a carter who had stopped at a crossing. The big waggon was filled with people going to St. Anne, and, at their invitation, he swung himself in. When they arrived at the little town, he gave the carter two francs, and, dropping off, made his way across the fields to the hills, which seemed to reach away from a great church. He found the street lined with little stands, with men, women and children, sick, well and infirm, all selling rosaries, crucifixes and other articles. When he attempted to climb the hill he saw ancient graves and steps with penitents climbing on their knees slowly upward to strange shrines. He had heard of La Bonne Sainte Anne, the wonderful shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupré, which for two hundred years had healed the sick, but he had never seen it, and the strange scene, the crowds of people, the penitents, the absolute faith of hundreds, seemed to calm him, to ease the biting, burning gnawing pain in his heart, and he loitered on, watching the old women hold up their wares. Following a crowd of people to the great church that was raised to the dignity of a basilica by Pope Pius IX, he entered the vast hall, that in grandeur and architectural beauty, in the splendour of its statuary and paintings, ranks among the won-

ders of the world. On either side of the door were gigantic pyramids of crutches and canes, cast aside by the cured. He passed under the statue of St. Anne in the façade between the towers, and saw the imposing pictures and splendid stations illustrating the life of Christ, for which the basilica is famous.

Pierre, walking as in a dream, soon found himself at the altar near the onyx base of the statue of St. Anne. A good woman by his side whispered that they were facing the sacred relics: the finger bone of St. Anne, sent by Lorel; a piece of the wrist bone, sent by Leo XIII, and she pointed to a stone which came from the grotto of St. Anne, where the Virgin was born, for St. Anne was the mother of the Virgin Mary.

"Here comes the father—kneel"; and Pierre, not knowing what he did, fell upon his knees and dropped his burning head upon the rail. Then the father began at one end and slowly came down the row of kneeling men, women and children. He had taken from the sanctuary the precious relic covered with glass, and as each sufferer indicated the nature and location of his trouble he pressed the relic against it and blessed them.

"It will cure you," whispered the woman to Pierre. "I came here a year ago upon a stretcher, and now I can walk. It will cure you, if it is God's will."

"Where is your trouble, my son?" whispered

the father, who had reached him, and whose face seemed bathed in the glorious light that filled the great sanctuary.

Pierre hesitated. He was deadly pale, and the deep lines about his eyes made them gleam like those of some wild animal. The father was startled, and the thought passed through his mind that this man was mad. Pierre was greatly agitated, his form trembled; then he whispered, recovering himself by an effort:

"My soul is sick, father."

The priest glanced at him intently, pressed the precious relic of St. Anne against his forehead, and, blessing him reverently, whispered: "Come to me after the service," and passed on.

Pierre remained until all had been blessed, then he retired and took a seat while another group ascended to the altar. And so he sat and watched this impression of life and faith, then went out of the church and made his way into the country to walk, to wear himself out, to stifle this pain. He must have walked in a circle, as it was evening when he wandered again into the long village street where he stopped, a wave of passion and evil, murderous thoughts sweeping over him. He had flung himself upon a bench in a courtyard near the great sacred spring of St. Anne, when the doors opened and a volume of splendid music rolled out into the night air. Looking up, Pierre's lost and wandering soul saw the great statue of St. Anne, its head against

the rising full moon. He rose to his feet and moved towards it, and found himself in a blaze of light which came from the open doors of the great basilica. Weary, ill, and heartbroken, he stumbled and fell in the doorway and was dragging himself along upon his knees towards the altar, which rose dimly far ahead, when someone touched him. Pierre looked up, and the kindly eyes of the father who had blessed him looked down into his.

"You are ill, my son; let me assist you."

"Yes, father," replied Pierre, "I am ill; protect me—save me!"

Passing his arm about the boy, the father led him down the corridors and into a room and placed him on a cot; then he brought him some cordial and sat by him, clasping his hand.

"You are seriously troubled about something, my son; something is on your mind. Had you not better tell me, so that I can advise you? There is no trouble so great that God cannot wipe it away; no stain so deep that His hand cannot efface. Confide in Him, my son; place your faith in Him."

"I have been strongly tempted, father," replied Pierre; and then with tears he confessed his sin to the good brother, told him that he had been unable to pluck the love for Nœmie from his heart, that he had determined to go with her, to murder her husband, to murder her and kill himself. The priest heard his terrible story to

the end, then, dropping to his knees, he prayed to the God of good and evil, asked him in fervent tones to cleanse this soul and purify it. Then he talked to Pierre of the duties of men, and told of the life and example of Christ. "He died to save you, my son. He took all the sins of the world upon his head that you and I and all men might be better. Cannot you assume some of the sins of the world and crush them underfoot?"

And so this good father expounded the love of God and the Virgin to this stricken boy, pictured Christ resisting temptation on the Mount, painted Him in speaking tones as dying for him, for Nœmie, for all men and women, and prayed with him. He then led Pierre into the now vacant cathedral, where splendid arches seemed to Pierre to reach high into the heavens, and the soft mellow light seemed to come as a benediction. Down the long aisle the two passed until they reached the altar. The padre opened the gate, motioned the boy in, and, facing the sanctuary with its holy relics, its magnificent ornaments, its high candles, its holy of holies, they sank to the floor and the priest again poured out his heart for those in tribulation. The organ by a coincidence pealed forth an anthem, and the boy seemed to forget his sorrows. A strange calm and peace came over him, a feeling he had never known before, and he looked up at the man of God with streaming eyes.

"You have sinned, my son," said the father,

"but through God's mercy you are cleansed. He has wiped away your sin—come"; and he led him to the font and with holy water blessed him.

"Lie in my room to-night, my son," said the father. "I wish to see you again."

Early on the morrow he called for Pierre and was glad to see that his eyes were clear—that he was a changed man.

"What shall I do, father? I know I am strong in spirit; I can stand temptation, but I deserve some penance for my crime."

"My son, you have confessed. You have humiliated yourself before God. You have conquered yourself. Penance is not obligatory as though you had committed the crime in truth."

"I have sinned," continued Pierre, "and I deserve penance; the greatest I can have. I would join the church, father, if such as I can."

"Yes, my son," replied the priest, "the church is for such as you who have conquered self. If you wish a penance, go with your master and mistress, live with them, witness their happiness, be a protector to her whom you loved, be faithful to him who employs you; and if you pass this probation, if you can steel your heart against this love which was honourable but which is now dishonourable, if you can witness the happiness of this man and woman and not break the commandment of God, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife,' then you shall have borne the greatest, the almost eternal penance, and then—

then come to me." Saying which he led Pierre out of the long corridor, gave him his blessing, and watched him walk away a new man, for such was the power of religion upon this stricken soul.

"Pierre," said old Jean Rohar, who was sitting in his doorway, "you look as though you had drawn the first prize in the lottery."

"You are right, Monsieur Jean, I have had a great piece of luck. I had an enemy who did me great harm, but the case is in my favour."

"Ah, you are very lucky," said Jean, knocking the ashes from his pipe. "Lucky to get out of the hands of the lawyers alive."

"Yes, I am indeed lucky," replied Pierre.

CHAPTER V

ON A LEE SHORE

THE peculiar experiences of the crew of the ship *Daniel Kelton* had created a more or less panicky feeling among the men, who, though not optimists by nature, thoroughly believed in luck, and it was more than evident that they had run into a variety of luck that was a portent of evil. The men crowded to the forecastle-deck and soon saw a small vessel, looking like a brig or a fore-and-aft schooner, coming down before the wind, wing and wing.

The clank, clank of the pumps added to the feeling of unrest. True, the ship had been thrown over on to her beam-ends and might easily have been sprung so that a seam or two would open, but such an accident was rare.

The wind had freshened, and the ship was now making a long tack southeast by east, while the sail was coming down from the west-southwest.

"Queer direction for a fore-and-after," said the captain, dropping his glass. "She may be a banana schooner from down Yucatan way, only

her sails set too well; looks like a yacht. You can see the bend on that big balloon topsail with your naked eye, and she keeps headed for us all the time. How many knots are we making, Henly?"

"Ten, sir," replied the man; "we're a-hummin'."

"Ship's carpenter wants to see you, sir," continued the third officer.

As he spoke, an old red-faced, bewhiskered type of a sailorman came forward, covered with dirt and rust, and bringing with him a strong odour of bilge.

"Well, my man, have you found it?"

"No, sir. There's three and a half feet of water in her. We've pulled away the ballast for thirty feet, but can't get at it. The water seems to seep in over a wide surface. Looks to me, sir, as though she opened a seam, and the calkin' had just dropped overboard."

"Can't you locate it?"

"She's made too much water, sir."

"D'ye mean to tell me," said the captain, "that she's making water faster than the men can pump it out?"

"It looks that way, sir. It's gained nearly a foot in an hour and a half."

"This is a fine howdy do; four days out of the pilot's hands and obliged to make port"; and the captain walked over to the table and looked at the chart.

"I should say, by dead-reckoning and a lot of guessing, that we are about here," and he pushed a pin into the chart.

"About one hundred miles nor'west of Marquesas," said the mate.

"Jest about," replied the other; "and she's making ten knots. Take in the royal and topgallantsails to ease her up as much as possible, and we will make for Key West. Let me see. Yes, about one hundred miles. Do you know that inside channel by Marquesas?"

"I do in a way, sir," said the mate. "I've been through there, but I wouldn't like to take the responsibility of taking the ship through; it's lined with wrecks."

"Yes," retorted the captain, "the whole infernal reef from North Key to Cape Florida is a ship's graveyard, and no headstones. Keep an account of the water, carpenter, and report to me every hour."

It was one of the clear and splendid nights which can often be found in these latitudes, and the big ship was ploughing along under her lower hamper, with a big bone of fire in her teeth, tossing the luminous water high in air, which momentarily became more and more brilliant. Wherever a sea broke, the water turned into fire and the surface of the Gulf seemed covered with countless fire bodies—the long barrel-shaped pyrosoma, or fire-bearer; huge jellies which, like meteors, blazed their way along the watery sky.

The lights of the stranger were growing more distinct, and in a short time she was within a cable's length's distance and the men could see that she was headed directly for them.

"I wonder if this is another bloomin' hooker sailin' of herself?" muttered Olsen.

His question was answered, as suddenly the vessel jibed her foresail over to port, put her helm hard down, rounded up on the weather quarter of the ship and showed herself a fine model of a yacht.

She ran so near the ship that the men could easily see the crowd on her deck—whites, Spaniards, mulattos and negroes; and as she went by—sheets slack, a splendid picture—a gigantic specimen of a man with greyish whiskers swung himself into the rigging, and in stentorian tones came: "Ship ahoy!"

"Ship ahoy!" roared back the second mate of the *Kelton*.

"Want a pilot?" came again across the water.

"Pilot for what?"

"Any place," was the reply. "Key West, Havana."

"I reckon we'd better take him," said the captain to the mate; "but it's a damned queer place to run foul of a pilot."

"Perhaps we're 'way off our course," suggested the second officer. "We drifted fast to leeward in that gale, though we were up in the wind."

"Come aboard," shouted the captain, watch-

ing the splendid yacht with admiring eyes as she shot by them, a veritable greyhound of the sea.

At the word the pilot boat came up into the wind, her reefing points beating a clear vibrant tattoo on the taut, trembling sails, and the moment she headed into the wind a little dinghy dropped from the quarter.

The ship now came rattling, banging and bellowing up into the wind, her sheets slack, reaching to windward like a yacht, and giving the men in the dinghy a hard pull across the phosphorescent sea, while the schooner filled and came up on the weather quarter of the big ship. As the dinghy came up under the lee a ladder was thrown over the side, and in a moment an active, tall, black-eyed and black-haired man swung himself down on to the deck, shook hands with the captain, and followed him into the cabin.

"Nice boat you have," said Captain Redmond; "looks like a privateer."

"Yes," said the pilot, with just the suspicion of a foreign accent in his voice, glancing at the captain steadily; "she's yacht-built."

"What made you think I wanted a pilot away out here?" asked the captain. "We're bound for Liverpool with cotton, and don't expect to stop anywhere if we had our own way."

"I thought you might be off your course.

You're about one hundred miles from Key West by the short run."

"Through the Marquesas Channel?" asked the captain.

"Yes; and we thought you might want a pilot, as we saw in the shipping list that you were to stop at Key West to pick up five hundred bales of sponge."

"Sponge, sponge, man? We're chock-a-block with cotton. I'd never stop an hour but we've had bad luck—sprung a leak—and have about four foot of water in the hold. I will go into Key West, get a steam pump into her, and find out what the trouble is."

The steward had brought a case of liquors and some cigars, and the captain pushed the glass to the pilot, who filled it and drank to a prosperous voyage.

"You didn't run across a big ship without anybody on her, did you?" asked the captain.

"Hardly," replied the pilot, laughing and clipping the end from his cigar. "Excuse me, captain, will you ask the steward to tell your mate to make the course south-so'west?"

"Is that the Marquesas?"

"Yes."

"Well, I won't have it. Around Loggerhead for me and plenty of sea-room between them and Yucatan, or nothing."

"Very well," said the pilot, though his expres-

sion soured perceptibly; "make it so'west by south-half-south."

Captain Redmond returned, filled his sherry glass again and held it up to the light.

"You spoke of a ship," said the pilot—"a ship without a crew."

"Yes," said the captain; and he detailed the occurrences of the past few days. When he came to the examination of the ship and her condition, and said that they had left her adrift, the pilot started to his feet. The captain stared in amazement at the change in his expression; he might have been mistaken, but it seemed to him absolutely fiendish. For a moment the pilot did not speak. Then he said:

"You say you left so valuable a ship afloat?"

"Yes; we left her," replied the captain. "I brought away a picture of a woman and a little girl, but my men wouldn't go aboard of her."

"My men won't have any scruples, I'll swear to that," retorted the pilot, attempting to laugh. "We must pick her up. Think of the salvage. A full-rigged ship, you say, all sail blown away, in ballast in casks, and adrift in the Gulf of Mexico, not a hundred miles north." This the pilot repeated rapidly and entered in a note-book, after which the two men went on deck.

The dinghy was still alongside, and running down to her the pilot whispered a few moments to the boat-keeper, who shoved off as he came up. A few moments later the ship was on her course,

and the pilot boat, again wing and wing, was heading to the northeast, presumably in search of the mysterious ship.

The pilot's duties did not really begin until they had sighted Sand Key Light off Key West, but Captain Redmond permitted him, as it would cost no more, to make the course and assume virtual command. In truth the singular experiences of the past few days had affected his nerves, and he felt easier to shift the responsibility. Into the night he and the pilot sat in the cabin, with occasional runs on deck, and discussed the remarkable experience of the past two days. At midnight they separated, the pilot going on deck, where occasionally he relieved the man at the wheel. During one of these relief periods the second mate, who was not on watch, came on deck and looked at the compass.

"Oh, you're at the helm, are you?" he said, seeing the pilot. "I came up to overhaul the man at the wheel for letting her fall off so; the course was so'west by south-half-south, wasn't it?"

"Yes," replied the pilot, looking at him with a scowl.

"Well, she's been two points to the east'ard for the past half hour. I have a compass over my head in my bunk."

"I see," replied the pilot; "but there's a heavy westerly current here somehow. The Gulf

Stream sets round in a kind of vortex, and you want to allow for that."

"I'm glad to know that. I've sailed up the Gulf a number of times but never knew it"; and the mate went below.

The wind freshened towards morning, and at three bells the watch took in the royals and topgallantsails and got them on again at eight bells. An hour later "Land—o-o-o!" came booming aft, and the tall spire of Loggerhead—the extreme western end of the Florida reef—rose out of the sea almost dead ahead.

The captain did not appear; the steward said he was sick. The first officer went down to see him and found him fast asleep. When he tried to rouse him, he saw that he was drowsy and naturally concluded that he had drunk too much the night before, especially as the pilot confessed with a laugh that the captain had brought out his best wine. By four bells the ship was within five miles of the light and under a press of sail—the pilot had crowded everything on her, as the wind was falling.

"We generally sheer off a little more than this," said the first mate; "but I s'pose there's plenty of water."

"Loads of it," answered the pilot, lighting a cigarette. "Red Snapper men say there's no bottom here, and it looks it."

The day was perfect, hot, but not uncomfortable, the sea smooth, and just wind enough to

fill the sails. The water was a rich green, melting into blue, and racing over it were countless fairy craft—the Portuguese men-of-war; trailing its purple tentacles, the raft-like porpita and velella, while under the surface were brilliant-hued jelly-fishes, tinted in pink and amber. On the surface were scattered patches of graceful sargassum, or Gulf weed, sweeping around with the great Gulf Stream, and over it leaped and soared the flying gurnard and delicate flying-fishes of various kinds. That land was near was evident by the gulls that came flying by—noddies with dark coats and white heads, and many more. Loggerhead was now plainly visible—a long, low, narrow key about two miles in length, covered with low-lying brush, in the centre of which rose the lighthouse, one of the tallest in the United States.

No fairer day ever dawned upon the Mexican Gulf. Not a cloud drifted across the perfect turquoise sky; not a white-cap broke the emerald-amber tint, grading into intense blue of the waters; and the fair picture of a ship under full sail seemed staged by some great artist—a picture of a summer sea, where gentle winds fanned cheek and sail and wafted ships on to "gulfs enchanted."

"Keep her off a point," said the pilot, glancing at the binnacle.

"Slack away the weather-fore and mainsheets," shouted the mate. "Steady!" as the ship took

the wind more on her quarter, her course being to haul around to the south of Loggerhead, and then down the Gulf Stream to Key West—a route thousands of ships have followed more or less directly since.

The wind freshened slightly and the ship keeled over under it. The carpenter had reported the water down to two and a half feet in the hold. The men were joking and in good humour over the possible lay-up, when "Breakers ahead!" came shrilly from the lookout.

"Hard a-starboard!" screamed the mate as he sprang into the lee rigging, followed by the pilot. In some incomprehensible manner the man whirled the helm to port. What the mate saw, almost under the bow, was a strange olive-green shadow—it might have been a huge whale—over which the water did not break, but boiled and surged, telling of a reef.[1]

"Starboard, you son-of-a-dog! starboard!" roared the mate, reaching down for a belaying-pin and hurling it full at the man at the wheel, who dodged it, and whirled the wheel in the opposite direction. But it was too late. With a strange scraping sound the ship seemed to slide up into the air, to fall over, then stop with a jerk so sudden that the fore- and main- topgal-

[1] It may possibly strike the reader that such a tame wreck is a pigment of fiction, but the author saw a *David Kelton*, a full-rigged ship, under full sail on a clear and sunshiny day, strike this very reef in 1860, and not a sea breaking. When he passed it again, in 1904, the sea could be seen, six miles off, piling over it.

lant-masts went by the board, filling the tops with wreckage.

"You yellow hell-cat, what does this mean?" screamed the first officer, picking up a brass belaying-pin and advancing on the pilot as the captain appeared at the companionway scratching his head and rubbing his eyes as though he were half asleep.

"I don't know," said the man, pale and seemingly much excited. "I've taken ships over this course since '42 and I never knew this place before. Some false current must have swept us in."

"Looks to me mighty queer, Mr. Pilot. D'ye hear that?" cried the first officer, putting his face within a few inches of the livid countenance of the pilot. "Get that into your brain-box."

"What's it all about, Henly?" asked the captain, pushing between the men.

"All about?" screamed the infuriated mate. "It means that while you have been below drunk, this damned dago wrecker has put the ship on the reef."

"Drunk!" echoed the captain, shaking his fist at the mate; "say that again and I'll put you in irons. I took two glasses of sherry last night with the pilot and no more. I was never drunk in my life. I leave it to you, pilot."

"I didn't notice what you drank," said the pilot. "You'd better not waste any time talking, but attend to the ship."

"I have my eye on you, Mr. Pilot," shouted the first officer, foaming with rage. "Look to yourself, and if any wreckers reach us before we get word to the authorities, I'll hang you up at the yard-arm."

"You'll attend to your duties," said the captain, pulling on his jacket, which he had brought up in his hands.

The mate glared at his superior, then at the pilot, and went forward without a word.

The men piled aloft, furled the sails, cut away the wreckage and got it on deck. Meantime, the mate lowered a boat and inspected the ship's position. She had run on to a reef of branch coral at flood tide in two fathoms of water, which explained the fact that the sea did not break. But the tide dropped six feet here; in four or five hours they saw she would be on her beam-ends, and at the flood she would fill.

It was just three bells when she struck, and was so entered on the log.

A big hook was broken out, taken astern and dropped in one hundred feet of water, and the men manned the capstan-bars and walked away to a chanty: "Blow the man. My wife's sister was a mother to me—blow the man down! A sailor's life is the life for me—blow the man down!" which old Olsen led. In half an hour they hauled the anchor fifty feet, but had not moved the ship an inch. The tide was ebbing and she was gradually heeling over.

"You had better let me take a boat and go for help," said the pilot, sullenly.

"You stay where you are," replied the mate. "If I see you going over the side I'll fill you full of holes—sabe?" and the mate shoved a big bulldog pistol under his ear.

"I'll settle with you for this when we get to Key West," said the pilot.

"I'll settle with you before then, you damned pirate," hissed the mate. "A word out of you, a move, and I'll wring your damned neck and drop you over for the sharks to chew on."

The pilot looked what he did not dare to say and disappeared into the cabin, where the captain had preceded him, while the mate ordered out the cutter and sent the third officer with her ashore.

"Dave," he said, as the third mate was going over the side, "there's some bunco business in this. You go ashore and hire the keeper's big boat and go to Key West—it's only sixty-three miles, and you can make it by to-morrow morning. Notify the authorities and come back with a tug if you can—that'll bring you here if you have good luck by that night; but if you meet any vessel or wreckers coming, go aboard and come back with them."

The third officer went down the ladder, shipped the masts in the cutter, rigged two spritsails, and bore away to the east, clearing Loggerhead to the north and going out the ship channel along

Middle and East keys, and headed for Rebecca Shoals and the Marquesas. The wind dropped, but about twenty miles this side of the shoals the officer sighted a sail, then another, and in an hour he reached the head of a line of smacks and schooners which seemed to reach away out of sight. He hailed the first, the *Red Snapper,* of Mystic, and she picked him up.

"Where you bound?" asked the third mate. "Fishin'?"

"Nope; heard there was a wreck off Loggerhead or over yander somewhere."

"But I'm the first boat out carrying the news," said the mate, eyeing the captain, who was trying to scratch a match on the sole of his bare foot.

"Heard there was a wreck over yander somewhere," repeated the yellow-haired Conch skipper, lighting his clay pipe.

"Well, by G——!" ejaculated the third officer, not irreverently, but just by way of emphasis.

CHAPTER VI

A TRANSFORMATION

ONE bright morning when the sun was sending blazing shafts over the edge of the world at the old citadel, Nœmie, Toussaint, and Mr. Duryea sailed into Quebec, and Nœmie saw for the first time the old city, its cathedrals and historic landmarks, as she had never been farther away from home than the Jesuit convent at Tadousac, where she went as a small child and was taught French, English, and all the usages of polite French society of the time. Indeed, more than one good sister marvelled at the ambition of old Toussaint, who came to the convent school many times a year, rowing over in a small boat from L'Anse St. Jean; marvelled at the sums of money he gave them for the little girl's education, which was to be the best. In fact, the good mother superior concluded that Toussaint handed over every sou he received from the Government to Nœmie for her education, and lived on what he could catch and trap.

"Ma leetle gal's modder, she was an educate

lady," he would often say to the mother superior. "She had fine educate; but Toussaint—ah! he fish, hunt, trap, spak leetle French, leetle English. I want my leetle gal to be lak her modder—fine educate."

And so Nœmie was given the best facilities of the school, and at sixteen, a year before her marriage, went to her home in the Laurentian Mountains back of Pointe au Bouleau, with the education and culture of a French lady of the time, which had in no sense robbed her of the love of the life in the Laurentides. So the entrancing delight of Nœmie may be imagined, as she saw for the first time the splendid heights of Levis, the citadel, and the spires of scores of magnificent churches and cathedrals, which turned to gold in the rising sun. Then, when the vessel was docked, how delightful it all was: the ride in the calèche, the driver touching his cap to Nœmie, or her beauty, and staring at Toussaint's strange figure; the crowd of tourists, the Franciscans, sisters, Jesuits and nuns, the latter in distinct and peculiar habits which set off their pure and beautiful faces; the splendid buildings, the rush and roar of the city—all so delighted Nœmie that she often clapped her little hands, at which Duryea laughed and pinched her arm very slightly under her cape; and then Nœmie blushed and the calèche driver almost ran down a very fat Frenchman by looking around at the beautiful lady. Duryea and Nœmie and bags in

one calèche, Toussaint in another behind, with his long sailor bag and fur hat, looking very much like a reformed pirate in the attire of someone else, but with an unmistakable air of dignity and importance derived from several glasses of wine with a lay brother on the boat.

"Where will m'sieu' go?" asked the calèche driver. "To Rue sous Le Cap?"

"Do I look like Rue sous Le Cap?" cried Toussaint, snorting indignantly, like a goat. "Drive to the Grand Allé, number 436."

"Ah, a thousand pardons, m'sieu'."

"Follow the man ahead if you don't know Quebec," said Toussaint, settling back.

"Know Quebec?" retorted the driver, reining in his small horse sharply, and eyeing Toussaint. But the latter was looking far away at the plains of Abraham, and did not see him, so the man drove on and stopped at the big hotel in the Grand Allé, where Duryea had ordered apartments: Toussaint in a large room, twenty feet high, so grand he hardly dared to sit down, and then covered the satin couch with a spread; Nœmie in apartments next to him, a little boudoir opening on Toussaint's room, a chamber adjoining in pink, very dainty and charming.

An hour after their arrival a waiter came up, and breakfast was served in the boudoir; then Duryea asked if she could see a ladies' tailor in an hour, at which Toussaint grinned with de-

light and said: "My leetle gal she lak flower—she bloom all right."

Then the "ladies' tailor" arrived, a lady herself, if appearances counted for anything, very bright, very vivacious, very dignified to Toussaint, very lovely to Nœmie, and deferring every question of taste and style to Monsieur Duryea. The beautiful silks, wraps, the hats, furs, gloves and other articles which were brought in, overwhelmed Nœmie, and she sat or stood and was measured with a very red face, while Toussaint would say:

"Ma leetle gal she look hoffle fine."

The "ladies' tailor" tried so many hats on Nœmie that the latter believed she had purchased all the hats in Quebec. The lady always appealed to monsieur, threw up her eyes and whispered, "Charmante! charmante!" at which Nœmie's cheeks grew redder and redder.

"I don't know which to choose," she said.

"She is right," said madame; "it is an embarrassment of riches. She looks equally well in all."

"Well, take them all," said Duryea, laughing.

"What! ten hats?" cried Nœmie. "I would have to sit up all night to wear them."

"No," said Duryea; "but a different hat every other day for two weeks. I see nothing remarkable in that." Then to make Nœmie laugh he tried one on himself and looked in the glass, and said he was glad he was not a woman.

So madame sold many hats to go with her various dresses of silks, satins, velvets, cloaks, furs and countless other things. Had not madame had the honour to make and provide the entire trousseau of the Countess d'Arelon and the Marchioness de Brussy?

"Everything would be complete, madame—eh? Pardon—mademoiselle should have a complete wardrobe of the latest mode."

When madame left, Duryea followed her out.

"Mademoiselle has been living in the country a secluded convent life. She is to become my wife in a week. I should esteem it a favour if madame would see that she is provided at once, or as soon as possible, with the complete wardrobe of a lady of fashion, this to include everything except jewels."

"Monsieur will find Mantien et Cie, goldsmiths, the best."

"Very well," said Duryea. "I shall depend on you—everything the best."

"Monsieur will not be disappointed."

This short interview resulted in the coming of marvellous things in the intervening days. Indeed, not an hour passed without some wonderful article arriving, and presently Toussaint was crowded out, and took another room in the opposite suite. One day a smart young girl arrived, about the age of Nœmie, with intensely black eyes and black hair, a complexion like peaches—indeed, a very attractive and vivacious

little creature—who informed Nœmie that she was Julie, her maid, with the compliments of monsieur, who hoped she would suit. Julie made a little *moué* and curtsey as she said this, upon which Nœmie laughed, and said she was sure of it. Duryea was an artist, and he saw that Julie was a complete and perfect foil, the antipode of her mistress, emphasising her marvellous beauty.

"I have known Pierre a long time. I am his six or seven cousin, away off, mademoiselle," said Julie.

"Oh, that is very nice, Julie. It is well not to be surrounded by strangers altogether; it is nice to have your own people with you."

Then madame appeared with her assistants, and there were trying on dresses and taking them off, and a thousand changes and refittings, until Nœmie was inclined to think that it was very hard work to be a great lady, and that wearing one dress and going barefooted was very much easier. Duryea began to be restive. What with the dressmakers, the hatmakers, glove-fitters, shoemakers and furriers, he was distracted. He could never see Nœmie alone. If the army of outfitters were away, Julie was there, evidently amused at his discomfiture. Even Toussaint had bolted; he had found a quiet restaurant and wine-room in the Sault au Matelot where, strange to say, he had renewed acquaintance with the calèche driver, who proudly introduced

his rich friend to his fellows as from the Grand Hotel, Grand Allé, and Toussaint became at once an important personage.

But at last the end came, and one night Duryea and Toussaint called and knocked at the boudoir. Julie opened the door, and there stood a vision of loveliness, a marvel of beauty—Nœmie, her soft eyes beaming with love. As Duryea entered she flew to him, and he took her in his arms, at which Julie turned her back discreetly, but watched them in the tall pier-glass through her narrow eyelids.

Then Nœmie turned to Toussaint.

"Look at me, papie—are they not beautiful?"

"Ma leetle gal, she blossom lak a rose. I hecspec I never see dose brown leg any more"; and Toussaint pretended to weep. Nœmie turned her back, and Julie looked at Duryea out of the very corner of her eye, and shrugged her plump shoulders just the thirty-second of an inch.

"Papie, you are dreadful," cried Nœmie. "You must remember I am an old woman now, no longer a barefooted girl."

"Eh!" said Toussaint; "ol' woman! seventeen an' a haf—hoffle ol', das' fac'."

Duryea had secured seats at the theatre, and Nœmie, radiant and beautiful, was equipped and gowned for the occasion, even to a splendid white cloak which came to the floor. As they were about to start, Duryea drew back, and when he and Nœmie were alone, he took out a little box,

handed it to her, and watched her nervous little fingers undo and open it. When she saw its contents—a pure white diamond as big as a phlegmatic pea—she could not express her joy and happiness. He took her in his arms and pressed his lips to hers and held her soft, yielding form close to his heart.

"You love me, Nœmie, sweetheart?"

"More than I can tell——"

"Er—John," put in Duryea, laughing.

"More than I can tell, John, dearest," murmured Nœmie, from somewhere deep down in the cloak; then Duryea laughed again, and this was an excuse—ah, these excuses!—to kiss her again and again, until she said Toussaint would be tired and go to his club in the Sault au Matelot.

"Oh, there *is* a Toussaint and a theatre," said Duryea. "I had forgotten there was anything in the world, Nœmie, but just you." And so they went to the theatre, Nœmie holding on to her ring tightly, and seeing for the first time a play, "The Rivals," in French, an æon of delights. How Nœmie laughed and wept; how Toussaint sat like a statue and never moved through the acts; how Duryea watched the audience staring at his beautiful companion, secretly delighted—are things which might not be talked or written about, yet they were all very delightful in their way.

The next day madame completed the wardrobe,

and, in an effective street costume, Nœmie, Toussaint and Duryea rode to the goldsmith and bought rings, watches, bracelets, fans, card-cases, until Nœmie was completely dazzled. Then Duryea whispered in her ear, and a few moments later she went to Toussaint, who was standing very stiff and looking like the Captain-General of Newfoundland at least, and said:

"Papie, I want to buy a friend of mine a watch and chain, a gentleman. It is to be a secret, and as I do not wish John to see it, while he is over there tell me what you would select."

"Ah, a secret," said Toussaint; "that is very easy. Let us see the watches; something fine and large and heavy, m'sieu'."

The clerk took out the case; Toussaint eyed the watches sharply, and indicated one, a very big and very fat watch covered with carving, very ornate. "That would please, m'sieu', surely. Look at the ornamentation."

"Yes," said Nœmie; "but the inside is the most important."

"We can put the best Swiss works in that case, madame."

"Certainly; that is it," said Toussaint.

"But is the case good heavy gold?" asked Nœmie.

"The very best," replied the clerk. "Monsieur is very discerning; this case was made to order by a mining gentleman from the States, but he

never called for it. It is the most richly ornamented in the shop and sixteen karats fine."

"That would be my choice. It is for my son-in-law, M. Duryea," whispered Toussaint to the clerk; "a secret. Let us see a chain and a charm."

The clerk placed before Toussaint a box containing chains of all kinds. There was one very large—each alternate link a block of chased gold very much like the watch, then a link of gold-bearing quartz blocked in gold. Altogether it weighed nearly half a pound.

"My selection is this," said Toussaint.

"Monsieur is remarkable; this is the chain the American ordered for the watch."

"Then," said Toussaint, "we must have a charm, a locket for the picture of the lady who gives the locket—eh?" and he looked at Nœmie slyly, at which she nodded. Toussaint selected a large locket, turquoise on one side, red gold on the other, and the obliging clerk fastened it to the chain. As Duryea approached, there was much laughing and Toussaint turned and faced him, preternaturally sober, while Nœmie concealed the package in her pocket. When they reached the hotel and were talking over the events of the day and looking at the jewels, Nœmie shyly handed Toussaint the watch and told him to give it to John.

"Ma leetle gal, she ax her ol' fadder to peek

out a present, an' here she is. I peek her out masel'; you bet she keep good time."

Duryea took the box, took out the watch, admired it, then handed it back.

"There is only one mistake, Toussaint. Nœmie bought it for you, and to be sure you got what you wanted, she made you pick it out. Put it on."

Toussaint was so distracted trying to understand how he could have bought so expensive a watch for himself that he merely stared at the laughing couple in amazement.

Duryea had been in Quebec five days before he notified Pierre that he was there. He considered the move he had made ill-advised and had determined to send the boy on to New York in advance; then, upon inquiring of madame if she could provide a maid for his wife, he discovered Julie, and it occurred to him that the beautiful French girl might attract Pierre, so he notified him to come to the hotel the day before the wedding, and then learned, to his amazement, that Julie was a very distant relative, and that she was interested in the boy, as Duryea, a good reader of character, observed to his satisfaction.

But Pierre—what marvellous change had come over him? Duryea could hardly believe it. Certainly he was not the same boy. He bought flowers for Nœmie and begged that he might attend the wedding on the morrow to attend his master.

"M'sieu'," he said, "I have sinned deep to you and Mademoiselle Nœmie. I humbly beg your pardons. I know my place, m'sieu'," and Pierre bowed.

"All right, Pierre. Frankly, I thought I was making a mistake, but I believe you will be faithful to my interests. You will lose nothing by it."

"Many thanks, m'sieu'," said the boy, and he proceeded to the packing of his trunks as though he had been a valet for a decade.

Duryea could not understand the change in Pierre, but finally concluded that it was due to the French disposition, and thought no more of it. The next day they rode to the old basilica near the Cardinal's palace, and were married before the splendid chancel—a copy of St. Peter's at Rome—Toussaint standing with them, Julie and Pierre in the background. When the priest, Father Aloysius—for it was he—came out, he patted Pierre on the shoulder, and, turning to Duryea, said:

"Monsieur, I commend one of my boys to you. You will find him faithful in all things."

"You know Pierre?" said Duryea, astonished.

"I should say," replied the jolly prelate. "He has been making me a little visit at Ste. Anne de Beaupré until you arrived—eh, Pierre?"

"Yes, father," said the boy.

And so Nœmie passed out of the old life and into the new. Pierre and Julie went to the

station, while Duryea and Nœmie drove Toussaint around to a room, not far from the old wine house and the club, which Nœmie had furnished for him. Here they left him, bewildered, agonised at the parting, unable to say anything except: "M'sieu', you care for my leetle gal?"

Nœmie threw herself into the old man's arms, embraced him, kissed his rugged cheeks, presenting so marvellous a contrast to the old peasant, that Duryea could not but notice it and wonder how so fragile, so charming a bisque-like flower could be picked from so crude a stem.

"I have nothing to give you, Nœmie," said Toussaint, "but this—it is all I have—it was your mother's"; and he pressed a little package upon her. Then Duryea shook his hand heartily, and, assuring him he would be back soon, led Nœmie, weeping, away.

CHAPTER VII

THE DAUGHTER OF A TRAPPER

At the time the events of this story were passing into history, New York was still dominated socially by people of both sexes who had not only a speaking acquaintance with their immediate forebears, but who could on occasion, if required, demonstrate that they knew them back for several centuries. To-day, society, like ancient Gaul, may be divided into several parts: First, there are those who know all about their ancestors to the time of the Conqueror; second, those who know who their great-grandparents were; third, those who know their grandparents; and fourth, those unfortunates who are skeptical as to the grandparents and have them manufactured by Bougereau and others, with the family history and coat-of-arms. These facts ably give the lie to those pedants and maligners who intimate that there are no classes in America.

In 1848 it was different. Then the framework of American society depended upon family, the deeds of its members, loyalty to state and coun-

try, culture, education, and the resultant *savoir faire,* and about the social state was drawn a wall, pierced for heavy guns, trained upon the *nouveau riche,* the unknown individual, and all enemies of the conventionalities.

Society was still framed on that of England—unassailable, unapproachable by the commoner—and in the centre, its acknowledged head, was Mrs. John Provost Duryea, whose son had married the daughter of a Canadian trapper. Duryea had never taken his mother or his friends into his confidence. He had long been considered a desirable *parti,* but was supposed to be unassailable by the maidens and matrons of many seasons; hence, when word was given out that he had been married in Quebec, that he, who came down from a two-hundred-year line of Church of England Duryeas, a lineal descendant of the first Bishop of New York, the friend of Washington, had married a Catholic, someone whom no one had ever heard of, or probably wanted to hear of, there was consternation on the social bourse, a flurry of no mean order, and the scandal-monger and gossip, with which the very best of society is cloyed and cursed, began to extend their ramifications and tentacles and to attain information from all possible points and sources.

Mrs. Ramsey Chatton had a daughter who was visiting the sister of a Catholic prelate in Quebec. The prelate's sister had a hairdresser and masseuse, who had a son, one Gascoigne Dubois,

who was a member of the Sault au Matelot calèche drivers' club, to which the rich Toussaint Réval was the latest addition; and it was not long, in fact, before the somewhat extended honeymoon of Mr. and Mrs. Duryea was completed, that the facts in the case, well distorted, were ably distributed by the men and women inquisitors of society, and it was established that Jack Duryea had run off and married a gamekeeper's daughter who had always lived in the woods and who was little better than an Indian squaw.

Hence, when Mrs. Duryea's invitation to meet her son's wife reached her friends, there was curiosity of a violent and corrosive nature. No prouder woman than Mrs. John Provost Duryea lived. Her ancestors for generations had married and intermarried—indeed, from the time of the massacre of St. Bartholomew—with the best and most influential families of France, England, Switzerland and America; and the rigour of her standard can well be illustrated by a conversation one afternoon at a kettledrum with his Lordship, the Episcopal Bishop of New York, concerning the attempts of a wealthy family of a whilom merchant to enter the old society of New York.

"Your Lordship knows that we still hold to the same lines as our forefathers. My visiting list and that of your Lordship's wife contains no

name of a New Yorker whose ancestor was not on the visiting list of Mrs. Washington."

"I am aware of that, Mrs. Duryea," replied his Lordship; "but it is conceivable that other and very excellent people may move to New York."

"Very true, your Lordship," replied Mrs. Duryea; "but the same social conditions hold in Boston, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia. Let these newcomers bring letters from some of our friends there, and they will receive a welcome according to custom."

"I am sorry, but this young man I have in mind has always lived in New York. The family has amassed a fortune and they are well-mannered people."

"Is it not extraordinary," rejoined Mrs. Duryea, "that I should never have heard the name—Mason, you say? What does your Lordship's wife say to it?"

"Unfortunately," replied the Bishop, laughing, "she thinks and talks as you do, and I fancy that in the future I will not attempt to interfere in social matters. But really, my dear Mrs. Duryea, I think we should have an infusion of new blood into the social body."

"I am sorry that your wife and I disagree with your Lordship; and to change the subject," said Mrs. Duryea, smiling, "you received my note about my son? A most deplorable incident—the first of the kind in our family for two centuries; one of your infusions of new blood."

"When is he expected home?" asked the Bishop, raising his large white hand inadvertently to his forehead, and proceeding to count the pulse-beats in his temple, a relaxation which had become a habit and pastime when he did not wish to allow anything to engage his thoughts seriously.

"To-morrow," replied Mrs. Duryea, looking as nearly distressed as conventionality would permit—an exclusive model of aristocracy outraged. "Fancy a Duryea marrying a game-inspector's daughter, your Lordship! One who is known by a number, which I understand is three hundred and two. I have heard that they number convicts."

"Perhaps there were extenuating circumstances," suggested the Bishop.

"I cannot imagine it," replied Mrs. Duryea; "but I wished to ask you if anything could be done."

"They are married?"

"Certainly."

"As our church does not countenance divorce, you can do nothing, and very possibly he is not ready for divorce yet. I would advise you to receive her, and I would counsel——"

At this moment a knock came at the door, and in stepped John Duryea.

"Ah, mother, I thought I would surprise you, and so came a day earlier."

"John, my son!" and Mrs. Duryea arose and

stepped forward, then stopped, confronting a vision of beauty, grace, sweetness and dignity, combined with an indescribable air of good breeding, rarely, if ever, seen even in the Duryea home —Nœmie, her cheeks flushed by the ordeal, her gentle fawn-like eyes filled with love and tenderness.

"Mother," said Duryea, "this is my wife, Nœmie. Bishop, I am glad to see you again. Permit me the honour of presenting Mrs. Duryea."

"I am charmed," replied the Bishop, talking quickly and making conversation, as Mrs. Duryea, for once in her life, was absolutely dumfounded, disconcerted, and thoroughly at sea. She had heard the current gossip and had steeled herself, expecting to see some extraordinary person, the result of her son's madness. But this radiant picture, this aristocratic type of a woman, overwhelmed her, but only for an instant. She stepped forward, put her arms about Nœmie, kissed her, and led her down the room, leaving her son and the Bishop to chat and exchange greetings and confidences, as they were old and good friends.

* * * * * *

The day before the reception interest was at fever-point, and late in the afternoon a little coterie of ladies gathered at Mrs. Geraldus Van Rensselaer's, the sole topic of conversation being Jack Duryea's bride. No one had seen her,

and Jack himself had not appeared at his old haunts, yet in some way it had been industriously circulated that some kind of a surprise was in store for his friends.

"I cannot conceive Mrs. Duryea foisting a peasantress, a very common person, upon society, even if she is her son's wife," said Mrs. Bleeker, who was not always fortunate in her selection of words.

"Then you do not know Jane Duryea as well as you think you do," said Miss Van Zant, who everyone knew had been angling for Jack Duryea for years. "If her son married a Choctaw squaw, much less a 'peasantress,' she would introduce her on the ground that her son, by marrying her, had raised her to his own position."

"The argument of kings," said Mrs. Van Rensselaer; "but I should not have the temerity to try it myself, I confess. Pardon me, Mildred," continued Mrs. Van Rensselaer, who was very literary, "does Mr. Webster sanction the word 'peasantress'? It strikes me as a most extraordinary term, really. I do not remember hearing it before." And Mrs. Van Rensselaer stared at Mrs. Bleeker through her gold lorgnette.

"I don't always consult Mr. Webster," replied that lady, somewhat icily. "This is a free country. I have invented a number of words by intuition entirely. I fancy this may be one. Mr. Webster may use it if he wishes. But to return to the topic of our conversation——"

"You are not Jane Duryea," said Miss Van Zant, icily, knowing the unspoken rivalry between the two women.

"Thank Heaven, I am not!" replied the elder lady, putting down her teacup. "But here comes Agnes Rutherford. She almost had Jack bagged last year," she continued, looking over Miss Van Zant's head, but talking at her. "Come over here, Agnes," she cried; "let me see how you stand it."

"Stand what?" asked Miss Rutherford, a tall, slender girl of a beautiful type.

"Why, Jack Duryea's marriage."

Miss Rutherford's face flushed deeply as she sank upon a divan. "I don't know that I have thought of it," she said. "Jack, of course, marries whom he chooses. But if he expects me to take up a backwoods Canadian peasant with red cheeks and the patois of Miramichi, why, I, for one, will not entertain it."

"Nor I," said Miss Van Zant.

"But you are going to the reception?" queried Mrs. Van Rensselaer.

"Yes, I fancy I shall," replied Miss Rutherford. "I really should like to see the full depths of his folly."

"I must confess I should like to see a real 'peasantress,' myself," returned Mrs. Van Rensselaer, for whom the word seemed to have an uncontrollable fascination.

"I cannot understand it," said Mrs. Bleeker.

"Jack is a man of most fastidious taste. He absolutely abhorred women who were not up to the perfect standard of breeding, culture and beauty."

"I will tell you what I think," said Miss Vandevoort, a tall, angular maiden lady, noted for her decision of character, her brusque manner, also for her goodness of heart. "You are a lot of gossips. Jack is a forty-ninth cousin of mine —possibly that counts; but I am going to give his wife a hearty welcome. I don't care if she is a Choctaw and comes to the reception in moccasins and skis. I like Jack and I am going to like his wife."

"Blood is thicker than water," sneered Miss Rutherford.

"Perhaps," assented Miss Vandevoort; "but it is not blood with me. I have heard all these stories about this awful squaw, but I don't believe a word of it. I don't think Jack would marry such a fright. He may not have married an accomplished society gossip, whose tongue is pointed and sharpened by years of scandal."

"Hear! hear!" cried Mrs. Suydam.

"Felicia, this is absolutely indecent. Do you refer to me?" asked Miss Rutherford.

"If the shoe fits, put it on. I confess I fall into this gossip habit myself, but I am out for reform. I have heard enough about Jack's wife to make me ill. I don't believe it. I won't believe it. And my advice, my dears, is for you all

to reserve your opinion and suspend judgment until you see this squaw. She may be a Hiawatha, a Pocahontas or even a Minnehaha—what then?"

"Felicia, you ought to go on the platform as a reform speaker," said Miss Van Zant, laughing.

"I will if this gossip and slander keeps up," said Miss Vandevoort. "We represent society, yet at times we descend to the level of the purlieus. I stand for reform in society beyond a question." And the lady glared around at her friends, who, by the way, all loved her; then she arose and said: "Alice, give me another cup of tea, and make it strong, if you please."

Everybody laughed, and a suspicion of a smile broke over the stern features of Miss Vandevoort's face. "I am going to be as nice and loyal as I can be to Jack's wife, and I don't believe he has done a thing to disgrace himself or his family. And as for us, it's none of our business."

"Did you ever make a study of this scandal and gossip dissemination habit?" continued Miss Vandevoort. "If you have, you will notice that it is a makeshift for brainless people, who have their mental limitations. Again, the scandal retailer is always living in a glass house. It is in her or in his blood. He or she has some skeleton in the closet, and wishes to prove everyone else bad. Stop before you throw a stone,

and take an account of the mote in your own eye. You may have relatives who have robbed banks, stolen other people's wives or husbands, broken up homes, married too early or too late or not at all. It is infallible," said Miss Vandevoort, warming to her subject, and tapping her teacup with the spoon, "that the gossip and scandal-monger, the spreader of evil reports about others, is the last person on earth to stand an investigation. They merely wish to drag someone down as company. Yes, I will take another cup of tea," she continued, glaring around.

"And thus endeth the second lesson," murmured Miss Rutherford. "I believe you are right, Felicia, but what is there to talk about? Really, this is a godsend."

"Ah, you are hopeless," said Miss Vandevoort.

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A reception at Mrs. John Provost Duryea's was an event in New York, and Washington Square at four o'clock began to fill with carriages.

In the splendid drawing-room, which was one of the best examples of old colonial style in New York, built by General Suydam Gerardus Duryea, of Washington's staff, in 1780, and in which Washington had been many times entertained. Indeed, the old four-poster in the guest's room still bore the Washington coat-of-arms, which old Suydam had placed there after the death of

his chief. And the room is called the "Washington Suite" to this day.

The splendid drawing-room was supported by rows of marble pillars, which formed three colonnades down the room, and was furnished in white and gold. At the head stood the receiving party —Nœmie, in a simple yet royal dress of white satin, after the vogue of the day, presenting a picture of loveliness that later distracted artists and colourists of two continents, the embodiment of beauty and good breeding. His Highness, Duc d'Lambardi, told the American ambassador that in his travels over the world he had never seen such a picture of grace and loveliness as Mrs. John Duryea presented, and it was generally conceded by those who knew the Duke that he was a connoisseur where women were concerned.

Mrs. Duryea stood at the head of the line, regal in the family jewels; then came Nœmie, then the wife of his Lordship, the Bishop of New York, Mrs. De Ruyter, Miss Vandevoort, Mrs. Schuyler Lee Crosby, and many more, all descendants of intimate friends of Mrs. Washington, and whose names could be found on her visiting list—which anyone could see in the society library—presenting a picture of American gentlewomen who were a credit to their country and lineage. As the guests entered and the room filled, there was not the usual murmur of conversation. So general, so complete a surprise had never been pre-

cipitated upon an innocent and helpless community before, and there was a strong tendency among those who came first to remain at the head of the room and watch the surprise and possible chagrin of those who came later, and expected to see an Indian or a Canadian peasant thrust upon New York society.

Indeed, it was very much like an exhibition that an eminent American named Barnum gave about this time, at the beginning of his career. He advertised in New York "a horse with its head where its tail ought to be," and the victims were admitted to a tent to find a fat Percheron backed into a stall with its head where its tail ought to have been. The victims passed in and were led out of a back door, and then gathered for days in groups around the entrance to see other dupes go in, never warning them.

So Miss Vandevoort, with a great light in her honest and trustful eyes, and a very pink spot on each cheek, met Miss Rutherford near the entrance. "Have you seen her?" asked the latter. "What is she like?"

"I was never more surprised in my life," said Miss Vandevoort.

"What did I tell you, Felicia?" said the reigning beauty, tossing her head proudly. "What shall I talk to her about? Does she speak English?"

"You might try her on the French patois you learned at boarding school," suggested Miss Van-

devoort. "She also appears to be posted on snowsleds and log cabins; she also has a vocabulary."

All this time Miss Vandevoort had been walking down the third aisle with the exultant young woman, from where the receiving party could not be seen. Suddenly she led her into the main aisle and Miss Rutherford found herself confronting a group of beautiful women crowded about the line of receiving ladies. She looked for the incongruity—the Canadian, the "peasantress," and in a moment was carried on by the crush and was greeted by Mrs. Duryea.

"Ah, Alice, dear, this is delightful of you. Nœmie"—the very name was sweet—"permit me to present one of John's best and oldest friends, Alice Rutherford." And then the beautiful lady stretched out a little tapering hand, and said in the most delicious English with just the suspicion of an accent, which made her voice seem more fascinating: "I am delighted, I assure you, Miss Rutherford, to meet one of my husband's oldest friends."

How Miss Rutherford escaped she never knew. Indeed, she simply looked into the welling, pleading, violet eyes of John Duryea's wife, and forgot to say anything, her cheeks blazing telltale banners of astonishment. She was plunging through the torrent of guests when someone seized her arm.

"Alice, how did you like the 'peasantress'?"

"Felicia Vandevoort, you are a perfect demon!" retorted Miss Rutherford, turning on her enemy, glad to have an opportunity to vent her rage. "How could you deceive me so?"

"Deceive you? I was deceived myself. Well, what do you think of her?"

"What do I think of her?" answered Miss Rutherford. "I think she is the most beautiful creature I ever saw. But she is not the daughter of a game inspector any more than am I." And the black eyes flashed an uncomfortable gleam at the grim face of the woman beside her.

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The home of John Duryea was not a block from that of his mother, being in North Washington Square, east of Fifth Avenue; and on the afternoon of the reception, Julie, who had accompanied her mistress, was sent home in the carriage on some errand, and so entered her mistress' apartments, which were separated from those of her husband by a dressing-room, quietly and unannounced.

The boudoir was reached from the hall by a small anteroom, hung in the door of which was a heavy portière of dark-blue velvet. As Julie reached this, she heard something very much like a sob, and, being a nervous and somewhat emotional young woman, she almost screamed, but quickly recovered, her natural curiosity overcoming her fear, and moved the curtain aside a few inches and peered in. Directly opposite

was the portrait of Nœmie painted by Duryea in Canada, and before it stood Pierre, gazing at it with intense longing—so thought Julie, as his back was to her. Then he suddenly clasped his hands to his head, turned, and flung himself upon the floor before Nœmie's crucifix, seemingly in great agony of soul.

"So," said the young woman, "this is why Monsieur Pierre is so constrained; why he will not take me to the ball; why he is so changed with me. This is his secret. He loves his master's wife." Her cheeks flushed, and she almost choked with the wild and sudden rage that swept over her. "He weeps and wails before the picture of his mistress as he knew her, then prays for her."

For a single second the girl hesitated. Had she followed the dictates of her desire, she would have dashed in and overwhelmed him with scorn and laughter; but something prevented her; it would be better to investigate a little further. So she retreated and crept down the stair, then came up again singing, and passed into the boudoir to find it empty. Hearing a noise in another apartment as of someone dusting, she walked in and found Pierre industriously brushing his master's hunting coat.

"Ah, Pierre," she said in well simulated astonishment, "I thought you were out."

"And I you," he said. "Why are you not at the reception?"

"I was sent back by a fortunate circumstance. I rarely see you alone, Pierre. We were such good friends once." And she looked down demurely, and then glanced at him from beneath long eyelashes that shrouded her steely but beautiful eyes.

Pierre did not move. He did not even look at her. She was an altogether entrancing picture, the type of the stage ingénue who had played the part of maid, and was part-perfect in make-up and all the witcheries and coquetries of person and manner adapted to complete the confusion and mental balance of the average valet.

"Have I offended you in any way, Pierre?" she asked.

"Offended me? Why, no, Julie, certainly not," he replied, hanging up the coat in the wardrobe and taking out another, so that both hands were full. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, you seem so preoccupied. You look worried, Pierre," said the girl, moving towards him and laying her little hand on his arm, with just the suggestion of a caress.

"You are mistaken, Julie," he said, moving away—actually moving away. A flame of rage burnt and surged its way over the girl's face and neck and left her pale, as he began to brush the coat, never looking up.

"I can tell you what is the trouble with you, M. Pierre Lovièr," she said, walking up to him, now deadly white, her bosom heaving, and

shaking her pointed forefinger in his face. "I can tell you," she hissed.

"Well?" he said, looking up, a haunting fear in his eyes, despite his bravado; "well?"

"You are in love with the barelegged woman whose picture hangs in that room"—pointing to the boudoir.

The man fell back a step, covered his face with his hands, as though to shut out the vision of this new terror. When he looked up she was gone.

CHAPTER VIII

JULIE

THE New York Academy of Music at midnight on the first of the year was filled with a gorgeous throng of maskers. The French Cercle d'Harmonie had made an especial effort this year, and the scene from the first tier of boxes was one of unquestioned splendour. The stage was set for some beautiful Oriental scene—a deep forest with palms of graceful shape, and, far away, a suggestion of some Taj Mahal. The boxes on either side were filled with actors of the two Royal Light Opera Troupes, French and Spanish, which happened to be in the city at the same time, and one after another, in turn, they sent their skilled dancers, *en masque,* upon the stage to perform feats which brought cheers from the vast concourse of maskers which filled the vast theatre to overflowing.

Such a scene had been rarely staged even in New York, and the town was there. Men and women of the best families in dominos gazed at the marvellously garbed throng from the upper

galleries, or walked about demurely, unrecognised, on the floor, as it was but midnight and the real revelry and ball had not begun.

Never had the charms of fair and radiant women so marvellous a demonstration as on this night, and the famous beauties of the stages of France, America and Spain were there, presenting a kaleidoscope of shapely forms, gleaming arms and necks of ivory, in costumes of endless design and æsthetic beauty, from the diva of the ballet to St. Anthony, or from the king to the little monkey who sprang into boxes and performed countless impertinent feats. As time went on, the mirth grew apace and the dancing more sensuous. Groups of beautiful women in vestments that caught all the rays of the rainbow, rushed upon the stage and sang and danced in wild abandon, arousing the vast audience to a frenzy. The air was hot, cloyed with strange perfumes, which were wafted on every draught. Dark eyes, gleaming like stars, peered from hundreds of masks, and sirens, satyrs and goddesses romped and sang and swayed in the arms of others, in the glorified lights forming a scene some Nero might have devised in his mad hunt after a new sensation. Madder and wilder grew the crowd; beautiful women were lifted upon the shoulders of men that their graces might be seen, their statuesque forms blazoned in the lights, while in the great dining-hall a saturnalian feast was in process. The clock struck half-past two

when a tall man dressed as a Florentine duke, a man of magnificent proportions, seized his companion—a black-gowned Venus, her limbs dotted over with spangles (the stars of night)—and swung her up on the table, down whose long length she danced amid thunders of applause. The revellers, leaping to their feet, drank to her and screamed for her to unmask. Men, women, old and young, tore the masks from their faces at the signal, but the girl sprang to her protector, who rushed her through the crowd and up the broad stairs into the gallery, where, breathless, she sat watching the mad, sensuous display below.

"Now, madame, I have saved you from publicity—from possible disgrace. Perhaps you will do me the honour to unmask. I am sure you are the most beautiful woman in the world."

"You will be disappointed in more ways than one, monsieur," replied the girl in the best of French, her beautiful mouth twitching—a nervous trick she had—her white pearly teeth gleaming; "and as to yourself—will you unmask?"

"Certainly," responded her partner.

"Very well—after you, monsieur," said the girl, laughing in a bewitching fashion.

The man raised a white, too much bejewelled hand, hesitated a moment, then, with a quick movement, tore aside the green mask and displayed the face of one of the handsomest and

best known men in New York—Stuyvesant Morley, equally at home in London, Paris, Berlin or New York.

The girl smiled, showing her brilliant teeth, and from the speaking lips rippled a melodious laugh which still had a suggestion of unpleasantness.

"Monsieur has made no great sacrifice, as I knew him before," she said.

"Ah, you know me," replied Morley; "this is interesting. It reminds me of an incident last year in this very place when a friend of mine devoted himself to a most beautiful woman—I refer to figure, of course."

"Of course," repeated the girl in French; "that is all there is to a woman."

"And," continued Morley, not minding the interruption, "when it came to unmasking, he faced his——"

"His wife?" said the girl, laughing.

"No; his grandmother," said Morley, dryly. "But you?"

"No, I am not your grandmother—that is, not quite," replied the girl, not exactly seeing the point; "but still monsieur will be disappointed. Does monsieur insist?"

"Monsieur does," replied Morley, laughing, reaching down ready to kiss her, *nolens volens,* on the unmasking, the lust and blaze of conquest in his eyes.

The girl crossed her spangled leg deliberately,

took off one of her dainty black satin high-heeled shoes, which still had a strong flavour of Clos St. Thierry, '37, looked at it, shrugged her white shoulders, put it on again, took from the gold bangle at her waist a gold monogrammed cigarette, placed it between her lips in the most tantalising fashion—which she well knew would complete the undoing of the man—asked him for a light, and blew the nebulous rings one after another over into the hot, perfumed air.

"Patience is on his monument," said Morley.

"Monsieur will be sorry," said the girl.

"Never," replied her companion, passing his powerful arm about her, from which she did not shrink.

"And you really, really love me?" she cried, making a little *moué* at him with her lips. "Love me more than anyone else?"

"What do you think?" said the man, looking into the eye-slits of her mask in a dangerous fashion for maids.

But the girl puffed at her cigarette, the air grew denser with perfume, and the tinsel from cascarones and confetti blazed and sparkled below.

Morley was a striking personality, his face was the kind given to the gods by Grecian sculptors, but which one rarely sees in the flesh; his features were regular, the jaw strong and firm—that of a man who was accustomed to have his way. His eyes were dark, hair curly, slightly

grey, and his complexion one which any woman might have been proud of—too white, in fact. Morley was a human god, and, standing six feet and a half, a splendid picture of a man; the hero of a thousand affairs of the heart, and after this chance acquaintance of four or five hours, he, as usual, believed himself desperately in love.

He had met the girl in a curious way. He was leaving home for the ball, just stepping into his cab, when a little cloaked woman stumbled; and rushing to pick her up, he found an adorable figure involved in the cloak, and lifted her to her feet. "Well met!" he cried; "you are going to the ball?"

"I am, monsieur," she replied in the best of French; "it was very stupid in me to fall down."

"My carriage is at your service, mademoiselle," said Morley. "I will get another and follow."

"No, indeed," replied the lady. "Monsieur is a cavalier, but, frankly, I prefer company"; and, without more ado, she stepped in.

Morley was not a religious man—neither was he a scoffer. He broke all the tenets of religion a thousand times without a thought, yet he considered the church a part of conventional life to be respected. His father had held a place in old Trinity since the time of Bishop Provost, the first Episcopal Bishop of New York; and when he rose early enough he could be seen in the family pew. So he was perfectly familiar with the litany and the service, and, without in-

tending to be irreverent, he said to himself as he looked at the beautiful figure before him, dressed and designed by art and nature to lure and tempt mankind: "Here beginneth the first lesson."

"You insist, then, monsieur?" she continued.

"I do," he replied. "Anyone else would have unmasked you long ago."

"Perhaps you will unpin the elastic," and she turned her perfect back and naked shoulders to him.

He unfastened the mask, took it off, and, for a single second, she looked away, then turned and blazed her black eyes into his.

"Julie!" he gasped.

"Yes, Julie," answered the girl; "and you forgot to kiss me."

"I will attend to that later—a hundred eyes are upon us." And he slipped on his mask and laughed a mellow, hearty laugh, while the girl pouted, pretended to be angry, but finally laughed herself and said:

"It is different now, monsieur—eh?"

"Julie—of all things—in Heaven's name, how did you get here? Does Mrs. Duryea know it?"

"Hardly. My dear mistress is abed and asleep. Her husband is doubtless over in the Grand Opera box with the prima donna—that is he with the purple doublet; and madame's best friend—madame's adorer—don't interrupt me"—as the man started—"is swearing eternal devotion to

her maid, and has drunk eternal allegiance to her, out of her shoe, half a dozen times in two hours."

Morley laughed heartily, and lifted her little hand—white, dimpled, comely—to his lips.

"So you won't believe I love you?" he said in his best tones, adapted to exactly just such situations.

"Yes, monsieur," said the girl, with just the suspicion of a laugh. "I do not believe you now love me less—but you love madame more."

"What is this absurdity?" cried Morley—"love the wife of my best friend!"

The girl turned and deliberately blew a puff of perfumed smoke full in his face, but Morley did not even wink. He had been accused of many entanglements in a somewhat eventful life, but no one had ever said that his—what the Spanish call *fortaleza*—had ever deserted him.

"Monsieur, you cannot deceive me," said the girl; "all the men are in love with her—all but her husband."

"Is he weary of her already?" quickly responded Morley. "Impossible!"

Julie laughed. "Yes, monsieur—in his way. But why is it that the men all adore her? She never does a thing to attract them. She is an innocent fool, without an idea beyond her home and her husband. She lacks *chic*, lacks virility —*verve*."

"Yes; she lacks everything that her maid has," put in Morley.

"Yet," said Julie, taking a glass of absinthe from the waiter—"yet you would give your life to be in his shoes—don't deny it, monsieur. I have watched you time and again."

"And I have watched you, too, Julie," said the man.

"I know you have, monsieur; but it is very easy to read the eyes of a man like you when——" said the girl, lifting her leg over and posing her dimpled elbow upon it, steadying her chin with her white fingers, and looking him full in the eyes, according to Rule 32 for ingénues in Daldart's "Art in Acting."

"A very judicial opinion well expressed, but authorities not quoted," said Morley, laughing.

"There is Julie *vs.* M. Morley," said the girl, raising her mask and glancing at him, then dropping it as a defensive move. The dance was still on, the air was still filled with the perfume of violets, of sandal and myrrh, and silver and gold confetti was dropping on the heads of the revellers below all along the tier.

"We are great jokers—you and I, monsieur," said the girl; "but let me tell you that any woman could tell you that you were enamoured of madame—men are stupid in some things. I know it, and I know that you propose to win her, as you propose to win me—and someone else—and someone else—God help them! What

is there in her face to attract men? There is you, monsieur, and the rest, and Pierre Lovièr—the poor fool—so in love with his mistress that he weeps and sighs and thinks I am not sure of it"; and the girl tore away her mask, ground it in her hands, and hurled it down on to the sea of heads. "A few years ago Julie was good enough for him, monsieur, but now it is Nœmie—Madame Nœmie, if you please—poor fool that he is. Why, monsieur, she actually pities Pierre. Could anything be worse than the pity of a woman? She knows that he loves her, and she is sorry for him—bah!

"I asked him to take me to the ball to-night," confessed the girl, working herself into a fury; "but no—'madame was to be alone'—he could not go. 'Are you madame's valet, Pierre?' I asked; but even that did not penetrate his ox-hide. He is so in love with her that he is content to be in the same house—that he may even breathe the same air is enough—poor fool!

"Yes, thanks—absinthe.

"Where will Master Pierre be when I give out the hint to M. Duryea?" and the girl turned her flushed face to her companion and startled him by the steely expression of her eyes—cold, scintillating, merciless.

"Jealous of Pierre," thought Morley, "who is in love with his master's wife; and yet they wonder why I do not marry"; and he laughed

again at his thoughts, and signalled the waiter again.

"Pierre may not be so simple as he looks," suggested this baiter of jealous women, in a sympathetic tone. "Is it not true that he was brought up with her in a hunting-lodge, and that they roamed the forests together? She is a beautiful woman, and he—well, he is not unattractive."

"You mean that perhaps she does care for him?" said the girl, turning on him and looking into his eyes, her face distorted with passion, fairly paling at the thought—"you mean that, monsieur?"

"I mean nothing," replied Morley, trying hard to hide his amusement and elation at having struck the right lead. "I merely said that it was queer that Pierre should follow her to New York."

"If I thought that—if I thought it," cried the girl, biting her full, red, sensuous lips until the blood started. Then she flung her head into her hands as though to shut out some menacing—some hideous dream.

"You, monsieur, you are a lawyer—what do you think now?"

"Oh, I don't think anything about it—it is too much trouble. Again, how can I think of anyone when I see you?"

"Yes, monsieur; but——"

"It looks strange, of course," said Morley.

"Was it necessary for Pierre to remain at home to-night? He knew you and M. Duryea were going out, did he not?"

"Yes, I see—I see," whispered the now thoroughly aroused woman, through her parted lips, a subject of clever suggestion without knowing it; "and yet"—she straightened up—"Pierre is such a fool it would be difficult to connect him with an intrigue."

Morley was more than elated—he had long wished for just the ally who now played into his hands and whom he skilfully and easily aroused to a frenzy. Someone near Nœmie to keep him posted and to act the spy; someone to form a link in some insidious chain which his fertile brain was weaving to wreck a life—to maroon a human heart on the sands of slander or crucify on the cross of unfaithfulness.

A roar of jubilant sounds rose from the bacchanalian pit below. The maskers had thrown off all reserve. Masks were tossed upwards and trampled underfoot, and, in centres and groups all over the floor, dancers, men and women, were giving marvellous exhibitions of their skill, amid shouts of laughter and waves of sensuous music.

"Come, monsieur," said Julie, pointing to the mad crowd below, "let us go. The ball has just begun."

CHAPTER IX

THE WRECKERS

THE ship lay perfectly easy and the sun dropped to the horizon in a mass of gorgeous vermilion clouds which sent innumerable rays up to the zenith; the whole world seemed aflame. As the tide slowly ebbed, the ship began to list, and at the full ebb lay over at an angle of forty-five degrees; the men had battened down the hatches so that she would not fill at the flood. The mate, lantern in hand, was pushing along the side, trying to discover the source of the leak. Almost amidships, about eight feet below the water-line, he found a peculiar wound—the copper was cut for five feet and bent outward, as though a gigantic knife had been plunged into a seam from the inside and had cut a great crease through the shell. Had it been made by coral the copper would have been bent inward, yet it was very much such a wound as would be made by a ship running on to a rough reef. Curiously enough, this was the only opportunity to examine it, as the next day there was a heavy ground swell.

The captain had almost entirely recovered from the peculiar condition in which he found himself on the night of the wreck, and was in charge. By a fortunate chance the sea remained fairly calm, and, as the tide rose, the ship assumed the perpendicular—the men being forced to stand by the pumps. All their efforts to kedge her off failed, and when the first officer came on deck, after a few hours' sleep, in the early morning, and saw the distant line of wreckers coming on, he swore great oaths. It was a remarkable sight. The wind had hauled into the east, and from a distance of three miles to the horizon line extended a procession of white sails racing to the wreck—the schooners wing and wing, every sail set—the sloops flying great balloon jibs and topsails, while one of the schooners had a big fore squaresail.

The wind slowly died down with the sun, and, when the leading schooner was within a mile of the wreck, it died out entirely and left the white-sailed fleet strung along the turquoise sea like a chalice of pearls. The "dead calm" of these regions converted the Gulf into a disc of steel, the sky-line was lost, the sun hot and blazing, the only sound the weird cry of the laughing gulls that came sweeping around to see what this strange thing was.

Seeing that the wind had failed them, the first wreckers in the race dropped their boats and began a race for the wreck, and in the second

came the third mate who had gone for assistance. The four men in the first boat bent to the oars, under the constant urging of a man in the stern, a red-faced giant in a linen shirt that was thrown completely open at the throat, a pair of linen trousers, while upon his head was a big straw sombrero. He evidently knew every foot of the reef, as he sent the boat into impossible places; and suddenly at the word, every man sprang overboard and ran the boat over a shallow coral flat, then jumped in and swung to the oars again, gaining a hundred yards over the following boats, so coming up alongside the *Kelton* in the lead, with a rush.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted the man.

"Ahoy yourself!" came from the first officer, in the main-chains.

"Want any help? You look as though you did," said the wrecker, now alongside.

"We want no help from that gang," shouted the mate, pointing to the line of sails which seemed to reach over the edge of the world to the east.

"Well, that's all you'll get around here," retorted the big wrecker, standing up. "I'm the owner of the *Micramoc,* the schooner in the lead, and I make you a formal tender of my services before witnesses."

"Tender—and be damned!" said the mate, scratching a match on the main backstay and lighting his pipe.

"Keep cool, Sam—keep cool," said the captain, behind him. "We don't want to antagonise these chaps."

"Antagonise them?" retorted the mate; "they'll loot us if they get the chance."

"We're going to have a blow before long," shouted the big wrecker, drifting nearer and nearer. "Give way hard, Antone!" he said. The men gave a single quick stroke which sent the boat opposite the fore-chains, over which hung a broken backstay. With a jump the big man seized it, and with marvellous agility swung himself to the rail and leaped to the deck.

"You damned pirate!" screamed the mate, rushing forward; "what d'ye mean by boarding this ship? Get into your boat or I'll throw you in."

The man who straightened up before the eyes of the astonished mate and crew was an extraordinary figure, and he merely stood with one hand on his belt and laughed—actually laughed—as he looked down on the first officer.

"Throw this fellow overboard!" shouted the mate to the men who were crowding around; and being no coward himself, he made a rush for the wrecker, the men following.

Exactly what happened no one seemed to know. Olsen said afterwards that the man swept his right arm around in a low hook, and all hands within reach went down. Some of the men gave other explanations, but the actual sit-

uation was that the mate was knocked down by a blow from the giant's fist, and he seemed to take the men as they came on, singly and in bunches, until he had piled five of them, one on the other, when they stopped, and the big wrecker said, still smiling and entirely at ease, evidently enjoying himself: "You sailor-men better keep out of my reach—you are over sixty miles from a hospital."

John Daly laughed outright at this—he had kept in the rear to see how many the big man would knock over. Taking a bucket he poured some water over the mate's head; the men, shamefaced, fell apart, and the wrecker walked aft. The whole affair had occupied but a few seconds, and the captain was still on the quarter-deck.

"You are the captain of the ship, I take it?" said the wrecker.

"I am," replied Captain Redmond.

"Well," continued the other, "I am here to claim salvage. I am ready to unload the vessel—you can never get her off—the first gale will wreck and pound her on the reef and she'll go to pieces. We will take her cargo to Key West where the admiralty court will settle our claim. All I want is to tell you that the schooner *Micramoc,* Foster, master—*I* am Foster—was aboard your vessel first."

"My men won't forget it, I reckon," said the captain, grimly. "We may yet haul her off, if I can get help," said the captain.

"Have you looked at your barometer?" said the wrecker. "If we don't wreck her to-day it will be too late—a ship never gets off this reef," he continued, looking the master in the eye. "We have a rule down here that when we see a man don't know his own interests, we go ahead and tend to them for him."

The wrecker went to the rail, and, as by that time two other rowboats had come alongside, he ordered the men aboard; and by the time Sam Parton, the mate, came-to, the *David Kelton* was being dismantled by the wreckers.

A light wind sprang up, and in a short time the ship was surrounded with the vessels, whose skippers sent their men aboard. The mate and, by his advice, the captain, refused to talk with them and retired to the cabin, whereupon the wreckers, under the direction of Captain Foster, as they called him, opened the hatches, rigged the falls, and by the next morning, the men working in day and night gangs, had a good part of the cotton on deck and loaded on the wreckers. If the affair had been planned, they could not have carried it out with more system and dispatch. They towed out from a neighbouring island a big scow, loaded cotton on it and towed it ashore; then began dismantling the ship—sails, rigging, topmasts, yards, stores—disregarding, ignoring the captain and mate, but forcing the crew to work. They even stripped off all the copper they could reach when the vessel heeled

over, and in three days they had completely wrecked her—the man who laid her keel would not have known her—and part of the fleet had sailed to the east with deck-loads of cotton. Captain Foster, of the *Micramoc,* was the last man aboard. "You don't deserve it," he said, "but I'll give you two passage to Key West. I ought to make you swim," he added, looking at the mate.

It was the only alternative; the ship was cleaned out and the two men went over the side in silence and aboard the wrecker, where they sat on their own cotton as the schooner bore away to the east, confident that they were the victims of as piratical a venture as ever disgraced the Spanish main in past centuries, yet legalised in some mysterious way.

They had reached the channel off Middle Key, and were in the train of a long line of sails, when a low, yacht-like schooner came down the channel and rounded up on the quarter. Captain Foster got into a dinghy and was rowed over to her, going aboard and waving his sombrero to the *Micramoc.* The yacht, the same one that brought them their pilot, bore away to the south and was soon hull down. The following day the fleet reached Key West and unloaded, and that night a heavy norther sprang up and those who watched the ship saw her blown farther and farther in, until a hurricane carried her over into a lagoon, and as late as 1867 the bones of the old

clipper ship could be seen two miles to the south of Garden Key, where she gradually fell away before the inroads of limnoria and teredo.

The officer reported the wreck and its significant details in Key West, but before the matter came up there were a dozen more, and the admiralty court divided the salvage among the men who had offered their services and had been the means of saving the cargo. Indeed, in the twenty years previous to 1860 the long line of reef from Cape Florida to Loggerhead was a graveyard for the bones of ships and men. The captain and first officer, both of whom had an interest in the ship, reported to the owners, waited for orders, and in the interim tried to clear up the mystery of the wreck.

"Sam," said the captain one night as they sat on old Sandy's piazza—an old freed slave, whom Captain Redmond knew—"someone was too smart for us."

"Speak for yourself, captain," said the mate. "If I was going to spin the yarn it would be about this: The old *Kelton* was wrecked by a regular gang; there were two or three in the crew, and when the pilot came aboard there was another. Mind you, I ain't making no charges on anybody, because I can't prove a bloomin' thing; but when I yells to the chap at the wheel, 'hard starboard'—does he do it?—not by a damn sight; he pretends to get rattled and swings her over to port. Does the pilot keep

her in her course?—not a bit; he keeps her reachin' to the east'ard and a-fallin' away, and when I says a word I'm given a fresh-water yarn about a current and drift; and *you*—why, that yellow dog of a pilot gave you a dope that almost stiffened you out. Am I right?"

"I reckon you are, Sam," replied the skipper. I'll swear I took but two glasses of sherry—it was the old '37, but it laid me in the bunk. We were regularly keel-hauled and sold out, and they had it figured down to such a fine point that they were almost there waiting for us. If anyone ever asks my definition of honest and respectable piracy, backed up by the admiralty courts and salvage divisions, I'm ready with the answer."

"It's pretty hard to beat such a proposition," said the first officer. "It can be done, though, when we get another ship. I'll show you."

"I think I've got experience enough," said the mate. "The easiest way to make money out of the cotton-shipping business is to settle in Key West and take it as it comes along in the wrecking business."

"You are about right, Sam," said the captain, with a laugh, "but I'm going to make one more try at it."

The banana, cocoa-palms and tamarind leaves were rustling like soft gentle rain in the old garden and the air was filled with the overpower-

ing perfume of the night-blooming cereus and other tropical flowers old Sandy had planted.

"I reckon yo' gemmen mus' gone and run in wif Captain Foster," said old Sandy.

"I should say we did," replied the mate. "Do you know him, Sandy?"

"I reckon I do, sah," replied Sandy. "He was my mawster; yere he is now."

The men looked up, and in the doorway stood the big wrecker.

"If you gentlemen are thinking of going into the cotton business," he said, with a grim smile, puffing at a cigarette and stroking his heavy beard, "I can give you a chance. I need two good skippers who are law-abiding citizens. What do you say?"

CHAPTER X

TOUSSAINT'S GIFT

NOEMIE'S boudoir, looking out on Washington Square, was as dainty as a shell, with tints of pink and suggestions of æsthetic conveniences—and Nœmie was the pearl, the centre of its beauties. She had been in New York for over a year, and had become a factor in its social life, of its gayeties and frivolities, without losing a scintilla of her charm.

She sat by the bay window in a delicate morning-robe that became her well, and by her side, dozing in the warm sunlight, a long-eared King Charles, which had to be occasionally touched with her slippered foot to stop its discordant and half-human snores.

"You say, Marie, that Julie is indisposed this morning?" as the second maid answered her ring.

"Yes, madame; she sent word to that effect," said the girl, half turning away, making a pretence of lowering the bird-cage out of the sun, but glancing at her mistress between the golden bars.

"She is not here, then?"

"No, madame. Last evening was my evening out, with madame's permission, but Julie wanted to go, and I took the liberty of exchanging, as Julie wanted to go to a party at a friend's home in Carmansville. She was taken ill, but will return to-day."

"I hope it is not serious. Perhaps I had better send Pierre with the carriage for her," said Nœmie, earnestly.

"Oh, no, madame," said the girl, starting. "I am sure Julie would not like madame to go to that trouble. It is nothing but a headache, I think, to which Julie is disposed, and the carriage would pass her on the way. Madame is very kind."

"Very well," said Nœmie; "but when she returns tell me, if you please, Marie, and I will see what I can do for her. Poor Julie!—I am very sorry."

"Madame is very kind," replied the girl, staring at her mistress.

"I wish you would hand me the silver casket on my stand, Marie."

The girl brought an oblong silver box, and Nœmie opened it and took out a velvet case.

"You need not remain, Marie. Tell James to order the carriage for ten, and, if Mr. Duryea cannot go with me, I would like to have you accompany me to the jeweller's."

The girl bowed and slipped noiselessly out,

leaving Nœmie alone, a perfect and beautiful picture of a woman; yet as she caught the reflection of herself in the tall glass, she did not know it.

She opened the case and took out a gold locket, wrapped with a black leather shoestring—a relic of Toussaint. As the locket opened, it fell apart in her hands, and within, flattened against the glass, was a lock of rich auburn hair.

"My dear, dear mother!" said Nœmie, pressing it to her lips; "all that I have of her, but I know that she was beautiful and good. I have every want satisfied, every wish anticipated, but I did not know my dear mother—God bless her memory!" and she reverently bowed her head.

She turned the locket over and upon the back saw on a coat-of-arms an engraved arrow, the crest, a dragon of fearsome shape, sitting upon a crown, grasping a sceptre and a shield bearing the Latin motto, "Nothing without God." "It must have been given my dear mother by some friend, as people so poor as daddy could not have had a coat-of-arms, though," she mused, "it might have come down from some remote ancestor." At least it was a comforting thought. During her recent visit to Quebec, she had asked Toussaint about the locket, and he had replied that he knew nothing about it; he had found it among the few trinkets which her mother possessed, and supposed it was some cheap bauble.

Nœmie's visit to the jeweller's was to have this

locket repaired, and as her husband did not come home, she drove down with her second maid, Marie, and asked to see the salesman with whom she always dealt.

"I have here an old locket which I wish repaired," she said, as the salesman approached and offered her a chair in the little anteroom.

Mason, the jeweller and gem expert, took the locket, looked at the arms and then at Nœmie, with some surprise.

"Pardon me for being so curious," he said, "but I beg to ask if this is a family heirloom?"

"Why, I"—and Nœmie blushed slightly—"I can hardly say that it is. It was my mother's, who died when I was an infant, and we—that is, I nor my father, M. Toussaint Réval—know nothing about its previous history. Pray, why do you ask?"

"May I ask you to step this way?" said the salesman. "I wish to show you a very beautiful service, which will in a sense answer your question."

Mrs. Duryea and the maid followed him to a glass case some yards distant, upon which stood a coffee set of five or six pieces, in beautiful yellow gold with ivory handles; and upon each vessel, cream-pitcher and bowl, deeply cut, was a coat-of-arms, crest and motto, exactly like the one on the locket which the salesman held.

"It is a remarkable coincidence," he said, "as the arms, of course, belong to the same family."

"My name was Réval," said Nœmie, her heightened colour telling of the interest the incident aroused.

"Pardon, madame," said the jeweller, "but Réval was not your mother's name?"

"Certainly not. My mother's name was——" and gradually it dawned upon Nœmie that she had never heard the name of her mother mentioned, or if she had asked Toussaint—always very reticent—he had forgotten it.

For a moment she stood speechless, intensely embarrassed. The salesman, recognising the situation, and her embarrassment before her maid, gallantly said: "It is very common in America not to know immediate family names. I never knew my mother's name. She died when I was young"—which was a rich embellishment of the imagination, as the Masons' entire family lived in a little home on East Twelfth Street, from great-grandparents down; and being of Quaker descent, he knew all of his ancestors back to the days of George Fox, and was very proud of it. Mr. Mason fell from grace as a Friend in that intense moment, but he showed himself a gallant and chivalrous gentleman, who felt well paid for his reckless lying by the glance of gratitude which his wealthy customer gave him.

"This set," he went on, "is one of the most beautiful pieces of work we have produced. It is of special design and is of solid gold, twenty-

two karats fine, and represents about ten thousand dollars in coin."

"A singular fancy," said Mrs. Duryea.

"Yes," replied the salesman; "but we have supplied this gentleman with forks, spoons, platters, and various articles, all of solid gold and to match. It is a fancy, and on every article is the Grenfel arms."

"Grenfel arms?" repeated Nœmie—"Grenfel arms?" In some way the name seemed to awaken a responsive echo in her mind or heart, and she repeated to herself: "Grenfel arms—surely I have seen the name or heard it."

"The gentleman's name is John Rodger Grenfel. I think he is an Englishman. But here he comes. May I have the honour of presenting him?"

Nœmie turned to meet the stranger, who was a remarkably large man of middle age—a well-groomed Hercules—dressed in the height of the prevailing mode. His face was handsome in a way, with heavy grey whiskers, his eyes dark and very bright, his hair just touched with grey and slightly curly—a man you would have picked as an army officer—well built, well set up—with a decided air, a manner slightly insolent for a Democracy, yet all in all a figure to command attention. Several yards behind him walked a negro in mufti, a yellow, sallow-faced individual to whom a pair of big gold-looped ear-rings and an extraordinary height and breadth of shoulder

lent special interest. The newcomer was glancing into the cases of gems as he approached, and did not observe the salesman until he accosted him; then he smiled and said in a deep resonant voice: "Good-morning. The service is finished, I see."

"It is all ready, sir," replied the salesman. "Pardon me, Mrs. Duryea, permit me to present Colonel Grenfel. A most interesting occurrence, Colonel," continued the salesman, but at that second Colonel Grenfel moved and faced Nœmie, stood staring at her as though he had seen a ghost, his red face, perceptibly paling; then he dropped back and partly turned.

"Are you ill, sir?" cried the salesman, stepping forward.

"No, no," said Grenfel, recovering himself, and taking off his hat—still pale. "I beg a thousand pardons, Mrs. Duryea. I am an old fellow, and subject to slight attacks of rheumatism of the heart, which seize me at the most inopportune moments"; and he bowed gallantly, still looking into her face with an intensity of expression that embarrassed Nœmie, and gave her a strange and uncomfortable sensation. The yearning glance in his dark eyes haunted her for many a day.

"I have been admiring your beautiful coffee set," said Nœmie, turning her beautiful and expressive face to his, "and, as you came up, Mr. Mason was calling my attention to the coincidence of similar heraldic devices on the vessels and on my locket."

Colonel Grenfel took the locket in his hand, looked at it, and turned partly away to hide his face. The salesman thought he thrust his fingers into his collar as though to loosen it and for a moment gave a very excellent impersonation of a plethoric gentleman about to have an apoplectic stroke, which he carried off by coughing violently, then renewed his apologies for what he was pleased to call his infirmities, a pleasantry which his colossal figure certainly gave the lie to.

"This is certainly very interesting that you should have the Grenfel arms on your locket," he said. "It is not uncommon for various ancient branches to have the same arms. Perhaps we are cousins," said the colonel, laughing a little too heartily to be natural, the salesman thought.

"It is hardly possible," said Nœmie, "though I should be glad to think so," regarding the colonel with an interest she could not explain. "The locket was doubtless given to my dear mother by some friend."

"It comes from your mother?" said the colonel.

"Yes," replied Nœmie. "My father, Toussaint Réval——"

"Toussaint Réval!" echoed Colonel Grenfel, leaning against the case and closing his eyes that Nœmie might not read in them what he thought —"Toussaint Réval!"

"Yes," repeated Nœmie. "Have you ever heard the name before?"

"It is very peculiar, but I lived in Normandy when a boy, and Toussaint is a very common name there; and Réval—Réval—oh, it was the magicians at the play last night, the Révals—that is where I heard the name," said the colonel, eagerly—"that is it."

"That is not where you heard that name, Colonel Grenfel," thought the salesman, who had a natural aptitude for romance weaving, and whose active brain had not lost a move in the tragedy or comedy which he thought he was witnessing. "You know more about Mrs. Duryea than you wish to confess, Mr. Colonel, and I hope it is something good."

Nœmie had never had quite so singular an experience, and it had so disquieting an effect upon her that she bade Colonel Grenfel adieu, and, instead of visiting other places which she had intended, returned home. That night when her husband came in, she gave him full and interesting details of the incident, and succeeded in making him laugh, though Nœmie did not exactly see what there was to laugh at.

"Sweetheart," said Duryea, leaning over her and bending down to look into her violet eyes—"sweetheart——"

"Well, dear?" said Nœmie.

"I fancy all the Smiths have the same coat-of-arms, and there are ninety million nine hundred

and ninety-nine Smiths, and doubtless it is the same with the Grenfels. But," he added, "the really remarkable part of it is that late this afternoon your Colonel Grenfel called at my studio and presented a letter of introduction from old Baron Tenellie, of Florence, and he dines with us to-morrow night."

Colonel Grenfel was a guest at the St. Nicholas Hotel on Broadway, but he made his quarters at the Grattan Club, and that night he could have been seen sitting alone in the great reading-room, writing a letter. He sealed it with a seal on his fob, which bore a shield with three mailed arms, and the address on the envelope read: Toussaint Réval, Game Inspector No. 44, Postal Department, Quebec.

CHAPTER XI

SHIPS OF THE STREET

A GREAT city was in the grasp of a deadly and pitiless blizzard. It was the night before Christmas and Broadway was almost deserted, except down by Trinity gate, where a few newsboys and itinerant pedlars clung closely to the wall, hoping against hope for custom or trade.

To a little shivering figure, ships like those he had seen off the Battery in summer seemed coming down the street under full sail—foresails, topgallantsails, even royals set in this howling gale. On they came, careening by at intervals, spectral ships of snow, one after the other, sailing, plunging on, throwing the spray so heavily that the cringing figure again and again pressed back against the railing of the old churchyard to avoid being run down by the phantom spectral craft. It was a wild night to be on Broadway, and the hungry boy was so poorly clad that he shivered and threw up his bundle at every ship that passed and almost lost his breath in the flying spume. Suddenly an especially large ship

came plunging on. He could see her bellying sails, hear the wind whistling through her cordage, and so realistic was the scene that, stupefied by cold and hunger, instead of shouting the name of his paper he cried: "Ship ahoy! ship ahoy!" But the great white form drifted by, swallowed up in the glare of light and shadows down the street. So real was this last apparition, and perhaps the boy's fancy was distorted by his physical condition, that for the moment he could hardly believe that he had not seen a real ship; but he was soon brought-to by a burly, bearded figure—which appeared to have been washed overboard from the flying craft, or to have come ashore in some way—which seized the boy, saying: "Who hailed 'ship ahoy!'?"

"I did, but I didn't mean it," replied the boy. "Have a paper, sir?"

"Didn't mean it? Why not, now?—why not?" and the big man began to unwind a thick scarf from about his neck, as though he was preparing to take some violent action.

"I don't know why I did," answered the boy, shivering now with fright as well as cold.

"Didn't you know I was a sailor?" said the big man, ducking his head and getting in front of the diminutive figure, as a large clipper ship passed on, throwing the snowy spray high in the air.

"No, sir; I didn't see you—I was hailing the ship."

"What ship?" and the man threw the scarf over the boy's head and drew him nearer with it, stooping that he might peer into his face.

"Why," said the boy, staggered by the action and the question, "no ship exactly, sir; I must have been dreaming—I'm so cold and hungry"; and the little voice piped and quavered. "I thought they were ships coming down the wind. They——"

"What ships?" insisted the man, with a curious inflection.

"Why, them," the child said, pointing up the street. "Don't you see them, sir?—full-rigged ships in the snow-gusts following each other down the street. I've watched them for an hour or more—at least they look like ships to me. See how she lays over"—pointing eagerly at a white drifting cloud—"and the lights on her shining through from the corner. See the foam under her cutwater. See—look out, sir!" and the boy pulled the man back as a huge phantom of snow, swirling like a great ship of white, came rushing on, enveloping them in its folds, and disappearing with a wild moaning sound like wind through slack cordage.

"I do, my lad," said the man, staring hard, first at the snow and then at the small form. "They do look like ships, sure enough—ships before the wind. I'm only a month ashore from a long cruise. I'm a sailor; I thought you knew me and were hailing me"; and he laughed now

in such a jolly way that the boy somehow felt warmer. He was a great, bewhiskered man with a tremendous moustache and eyes very wide apart; and as he lifted the slender figure in his arms and bore him along, the boy gained an impression of his face which he never forgot. Eyes of grey, so kindly in their expression that he felt warmer every time they were turned upon him; hair quite grey, forehead high and red, as though burnt in a tropical sun.

"What is your name, and where do you live, lad?" he asked.

"Arthur Throckmorton, sir. Houston Street—number 24."

"Number 24—24," the sailor repeated. "Yes, I have it—24 Houston"—repeating it as though to impress it upon his mind.

"How many papers have you?"

"Ten, sir," was the reply.

"Will you go home if you sell them?" queried the sailor. "Here is a quarter. Give me the papers."

The sailor carried him to one of the queer waggon restaurants with imitation cathedral glass windows, that stood by the sidewalk, half buried in the snow.

"Take this boy in," he shouted to the quick-lunch man, who had shut himself in from the snow, and could be dimly seen through a steam of coffee and other good things. "Fill him up, chock-a-block," he said as the man lifted the boy

to a seat. "Coffee, good and hot, beans and hash, red-hot bread, more coffee." And all the time the sailor who had been washed overboard sat and watched the boy, but not a word did he say to the mite of humanity until the latter suggested that he could eat no more.

"What!—no more?" said the big man, wheeling around on the stool and looking down at him. "Why, shipmate, you haven't got under way yet—you've only eaten three pieces of pie. Why, what's the matter? When I was your age, I could eat a whole pie. Are you sure you can't eat any more?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, looking very dejected. "I'm very sorry, sir—I wish I could, but I suppose it's because I ain't used to it."

"Ain't used to it!" repeated the giant sailor, huskily. "Ain't used to eating!—my God! is that so?" and he repeated it again. "Can it be," he said, half to himself, "that in all this great city, on Christmas Eve, the night that God loves the best; when Christ fills the hearts and souls of men to overflowing—that there are children that are not used to eating? Do you hear that, steward?" said the big man, turning to the proprietor of the wheeled restaurant.

"I did, sir," said the man, who was staring at the wonderful face of the child—something very much like a tear running down his big red nose.

"I'm much obliged, sir," said the boy, and he hesitated a moment, looking from one to the

other; "but, if you don't mind, I'd like to spend the quarter you gave me for things for my mother. She's sick, and cold, and hungry. She's not so much used to it as I am."

"Hell and damnation!—d'ye hear that, steward?" cried the big sailor, shaking his fist at some imaginary person that he perhaps saw in the cloud of steam puffing out of the coffee-pot.

"No matter about your quarter, lad. Steward!"

"Yes, sir."

"Is this thing on wheels? You and I couldn't pull it round to 24 Houston Street, could we?"

"The whole business?" said the man, aghast.

"Why, yes," said the sailor.

"It's three feet in the snow, sir, and it takes two horses on the ground."

"Damn me! I could do it alone," said the sailor, and he looked it. "Have you a basket?"

"I have," said the cook, and, suiting the action to the word, he handed out a huge basket from somewhere. That restaurant was a remarkable place.

"Bully for you, steward!" cried the man when he saw it, his eyes glistening, fairly ablaze with excitement. "That's the thing, steward. You're a man and a brother. Big basket—big heart. Got a youngster yourself, I'll wager—eh?"

The man smiled. "Ten, sir."

"What! ten children, steward?" and the sailor rammed his fist down into his pocket and handed

him a coin. "Give every blessed one of them something for me, steward. I haven't one—but when it comes around Christmas time, I feel as though I owned 'em all. The man who has no children on Christmas Eve—God help him!—is lonesome indeed."

The sailor put the basket on the floor, spread a cloth in it, and looked around.

"Steward, I'm going to wreck this craft, and get all the salvage—damn the admiralty—so stand by. What's first?—what have you? Fill her up from bilge to scuppers. Pies, beans, ham, bread—more pie, cake, crullers, brown bread—yes, put in the whole roast—cold chicken, jelly"; and they heaped up the basket and covered it with a cloth. Then the big man paid the bill, and, taking the basket under one arm and the boy in the other, swung out bravely into the night, where ships—aye, fleets of ships—were coursing on under press of spectral sails before the gale, running down the poor, weak and suffering, on Christmas Eve.

The blizzard shrieked and tore down through the street, cutting like a knife. You could hear the gusts go screaming on over the tops of houses and far away, but the sailor paid no attention to it. He lowered his head and plunged along, turned down into the cheerless street and dropped the basket on the snow in front of a forlorn one-story home.

"Is this the place?—are you all right?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, looking up at the huge white figure.

"Then good-night, lad—God bless you!" and the man knocked heavily on the crazy door, gave the boy another look, and, with something that sounded very much like a big oath, disappeared, run down, the boy thought, by a big clipper ship of snow with bulging, bellying sails which at that moment came towering down the street.

The boy stood for a second, dazed at the man's sudden disappearance; then the door opened, and a wan, pale-faced woman appeared, holding a candle.

"My poor, dear boy!" said the woman, putting the candle down, pulling him in and folding him in her arms—snow and all—rubbing his hands and face. "I wish I had something for you, but there's nothing but bread."

"I don't want it, mother; I'm chock-a-block—and look at that," pointing at the big basket. "Food, mother—food for you." Then they both seized and hauled it in, and the boy tore away the cloth and piled the things on the table, while he told the story of the sailor. The poor woman dropped on her knees and, bursting into tears, prayed that God might bless this unknown giver.

"He gave me a quarter, too," said the boy, and bought all my papers."

"A quarter!" repeated the woman, taking it wonderingly. "Why, it's ten dollars in gold, dearie—ten dollars!"

"Ten dollars!" echoed the boy, throwing the long dark hair from his face and staring at the coin. "He said a quarter. He couldn't have meant to give me all that money. He just said here's a quarter for the papers."

"Well," said the woman, "a quarter of that is yours, and the rest belongs to the man—he made a mistake."

"That's so," retorted the boy; "it was dark and the snow was piling up over us. He made a mistake, and it's so much he'll come back for it."

* * * * * *

"Davy," said the quick-lunch man that night when the old crossing sweeper came in for his cup of coffee, which the cook saw that he had, whether he had money or not—"Davy, I'm near sold out. Such a man was here! You never heard of the giant Golier, did you—the man that smote the temple and busted the pillars?"

"I think I have," said Davy; "but it was Sampson, wasn't it?"

"A man like that came in to-night, swearin' like a pirate. I never hear the likes. Don't you smell brimstone?"

"Well, now you speaks of it," replied the old man, "it do smell kind of queer."

"He brought a kid with him—picked him up on the street—and how he did fill him up! Buys nearly the whole restaurant out, and what d'ye s'pose he wanted to do? Why, drag the outfit

around to the boy's mother. Look at that, Davy!" and the man put a gold coin down. "A double eagle for the children! What d'ye think of it?"

"What do I think of it?" said the old man. "Why, God A'mighty's walking around this blessed Christmas Eve in the storm. That's what I think of it, old friend"; and he reached down into his own pocket and pulled out a piece of gold and laid it down beside the other. "Tall man, you say?"

"Regular giant," replied the cook.

"Sailor lingo?"

"Nothing else."

"About half an hour ago," said the old man, "when I was trying to sweep the snow off the crossing, a big man comes along. First I thought he was drunk, for he grabs me by the arm and says: 'Ahoy, there, shipmate! Stop work!' and drags me into Pat Reily's saloon. 'A cold night, shipmate,' he says, and—'What shall it be?' 'A hot Tom and Jerry, I think.' Then he ordered two, and then two more for luck, and when we went out he says: 'You're havin' a long watch, mate; you'd better turn in. Let the damned city shovel their own snow'—and he handed me the coin and made me promise to go home to the old woman. What eyes he had!"

"Same man—the same identical chap," said the cook.

The wind buffeted the ill-conditioned house

until it shook again. The snow was coming in about the window, piling up in little heaps, and the window glass was covered with frost. The very candle seemed freezing, the grease refusing to run. The woman put the money aside, and after eating from the basket she and the boy went to bed rather than freeze in the blizzard that was quoted in New York for many a year. The following day the boy appeared in front of Trinity with his papers. The storm had ceased, the ships had all gone by. Some perhaps had made port, some had gone to pieces and were piled up in great banks and heaps; and the sun looked down again into the cañon-like streets. The boy watched for the sailor, holding the coin in his pocket, tightly wrapped in paper; but he did not come, and days passed and came again. One day it snowed heavily again, and the boy was sure that the sailor would leap from some of the ships as they went by; and late in the evening he still watched—standing, a lonesome little figure—until a friendly policeman sent him home. Although there was barely enough to buy bread and milk to keep life together these days, it never occurred to the boy and his mother to use the ten dollars. They would not touch even the twenty-five cents, impossible as it may seem. There was that inbred in both that they would have starved rather than use the coin.

One morning the boy was tossed into the street by another newsboy, and it occurred to him that

he might lose the money; so, with some hesitation, he walked into a great marble building on the corner, went up to the line of people at the cashier's desk, and took his place. He could not see the clerk when he got there, so the man behind him, a good-natured messenger, lifted him up.

"What is it?" asked the clerk.

"I've got ten dollars I want to put in the bank," said the boy.

"We don't open accounts so small as that," replied the official.

The boy looked disappointed, and something in his face attracted the attention of a grey-haired man behind the grating, who asked the clerk a question, the latter then telling the boy to go round to the door.

"So you want to make a deposit?" said the grey-haired man, as the boy appeared in the enclosure. "Where did you get so much money?"

"I didn't earn it, sir," was the reply. "I'm a newsboy on the street."

"Then you found it, perhaps?"

"No, sir"; and then the boy told the story of the sailor, how he had hailed the ship and the man had been washed overboard, and given him ten dollars for a quarter. The face of the banker was a study as he listened. Sometimes he smiled, then his face became drawn, and once the boy saw something very much like a tear in his eye, and it occurred to him that possibly the gentle-

man was not very well. The banker seemed particularly interested in the ships of snow, and made him describe them and finally explain how they were not ships at all, but looked so much like them that he almost imagined them real, and hailed the big one without knowing it.

"You said 'Ship ahoy!' and the man with the ten dollars came along?"

"Yes, sir; it was so natural that I almost thought he came from the ship."

"Perhaps he did—perhaps he did. I've heard of stranger things, though not many so strange as your wishing to make this deposit"; and he turned away and bustled among some papers. Then the boy ventured to say that he was sorry to have troubled him.

"You're not bothering me," said the banker. "I was only thinking of something—that's all. The ships you saw reminded me of something. And you really think the man with the ten dollars got off the ship, eh?" and he laughed quietly. "In whose name do you wish this deposit?" he asked suddenly.

"I don't know his name—I wish I had asked it; but then I didn't know it was ten dollars until my mother told me."

"I see," said the banker—"you wish to place the money here so that it will be safe until the sailor finds out that he has lost it and returns for it; and you are looking for him every day, eh?"

"That's it, sir," responded the boy, wondering why the bank man looked at him so strangely.

"Well, we'll enter it in your name, or your mother's, or we can give the sailor some name, as 'The man that got off the ship.'"

"Yes, sir," assented the boy.

"I shall have to have your name also—what is it?" said the banker.

"Arthur K. Throckmorton, sir," was the reply.

"What does the K stand for?" asked the banker.

"Kingsley, sir."

"Arthur Kingsley Throckmorton; that's a pretty big name for so small a boy," the banker said.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, with a wan smile, as though sorry but could not help it.

The man entered his name and address in a book, then went into an outer office, presently returning with a bankbook, on the outside of which was written: "A. K. Throckmorton, and 'The man that got off the ship.' In account with the —— National Bank," while on the next page ten dollars was placed to his credit.

"I suppose you haven't advertised for the man?" suggested the banker, handing him the book.

"I hadn't the money, sir," replied the boy. "Mother wanted to."

"I see," said the banker; "but I will do that

myself—it will be right to take it out of the ten dollars."

And so it happened that the following day in the *Herald* appeared this notice: "If the sailor *who got off the ship* on Broadway during the blizzard, on the night of the 24th of December, will apply at the —— National Bank, he will hear of something to his advantage."

As the boy and his mother were about retiring one night, to keep warm, not long after the episode of the sailor, there came a knock at the door. The woman opened it and a man bearing a basket entered. He was a fleshy man with a very red face, so very good-natured that to smile as he looked at one was irresistible. "Is this Mrs. Throckmorton?" he asked, putting the basket on a chair.

"Yes," replied the latter. "Won't you sit down?"

"No, ma'am; I haven't a minute. I was asked to fetch this, and this"—handing her a letter, and backing out.

"But this can't be for me," said the boy's mother; "I have no friends here."

"You are Mrs. Throckmorton," asked the man, "and mother of that boy?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Then there is no answer, ma'am—good-night."

The two stood dazed a moment, then the woman opened the note; as she did so, out dropped

a ten-dollar bill. "What does this mean, Arthur?" she said.

The boy looked into the basket. It was filled with luxuries the poor woman had not seen for years, and she burst into tears at the sight. There were cans of meat, boxes of fine crackers, a bottle of port wine, cans of soup, coffee, sugar, tea—indeed, it was the most remarkable basket ever seen in that part of Houston Street, and the boy became almost convinced that it was magic, so mysterious was it all. The next, indeed, every week, the same jolly man appeared with the same note, the same, or a very similar, ten-dollar bill, and the same basket; and he always said the same thing, utterly refusing to explain who he was or where he came from, though when she cornered him and insisted, he stopped and thought a moment, then said: "I really don't know, ma'am, but perhaps it's from 'The man who got off the ship.'"

At the end of a month Mrs. Throckmorton told him that with the money she had been able to pay in part for a sewing-machine, and was so improved in health that she was going to search for work so that she could repay the money sent by the unknown friend. Then the man made a suggestion, which was that they move, and he offered to find a place, which he did—two rooms in a clean, modern tenement on the East Side. And the boy, with more blood in his cheeks, stood opposite the bank every day, dressed in

warmer clothes, hoping to see the banker. He did not venture to go and call on him, yet he felt a strong desire to tell him about the good luck which had fallen to them. One day his watching was repaid. The banker came out of the building as he stood there, and he ran up to him, offering him a paper.

"Well, my boy," said the banker, recognising him, "the sailor hasn't turned up yet?"

"I've watched for him every day," replied the boy, "and every stormy night, too, but I've never seen him. But he brought us luck, sir. I think he saved my mother from starving, she was so thin and sick." And he told of the weekly visits and how they could not find out who sent the money and food; about the new rooms, the warm clothes, and the new light in his mother's eyes, and told it in such a way that the banker stared very hard at him, then suddenly asked if he had seen any more ships on Broadway.

"Yes, sir," said the boy, changing his papers to the other arm. "I see them every storm—don't you, sir?"

"I believe I do—I believe I do. And some go to pieces and some sail bravely on, reaching port; some are in ballast, some freighted with cargoes. Yes, I see them—God knows, I see them," and he took the paper from the boy.

"You don't know any of these men who draw pictures, do you, sir?" asked the boy, his delicate face assuming a serious expression.

"Why?" asked the banker.

"I'm afraid I shall forget how the man looks; but if I could get someone to draw a picture of him—do you think they would for a dollar?—I have it saved up."

The banker turned his head away as he replied: "Why, yes, I think I know a man who would draw it for a dollar. So you think you could tell him how to paint it?"

"Yes, I am sure I could. I can see him now, as he came out of the snow; but I may forget it when I grow up, and I never want to as long as I live. My mother prays for him every night."

The banker made a move to go, but, as he walked off, he said: "I'll see if I can find a picture-man for you."

CHAPTER XII

JOHN DURYEA'S PICTURE

ONE evening, when the snow was sweeping through the naked trees in the parks uptown, there poured out of a large window such a flood of rich red and yellow light that every passer-by looked at it; and if one could have peeped through the window he would have seen a very luxurious gentleman sitting by a splendid log fire, literally staring it out of countenance. He was a tall, fine-looking man who wore a black velveteen coat, which rather added to his artistic appearance. The furnishings of the room were rich and beautiful. The chair he sat in was high-backed, of rosewood and heavily carved—an odd conceit of the last century; the walls were hung with tapestry, and the doors were closed by sumptuous material which looked like cloth-of-gold, bearing purple fleurs-de-lis which gleamed with iridescence in the soft light. Odd pieces of armour decorated the walls, with groups of two-handed swords which suggested the Crusades, while all the furniture had an ancient and ele-

gant air, as though it were a part of a picture—a replica of some old masterpiece. The mantel was of old olive-wood, richly designed; the fireplace large, holding massive brass andirons, and it had seats in the corners. At the feet of the man, on a Polar bear-skin, lay a fine staghound, blinking lazily as he looked into the blazing coals. In the adjoining room the walls were covered with sketches and paintings, some framed, some not, while on an easel was a large unfinished picture of a woman.

The man in the chair, so lost to his surroundings, was John Duryea, and to-night he was dreaming wide awake, as he watched the vivid colouring of the piece of old whale-ship which a friend had sent him from New Bedford.

"Pierre," as a servant stepped quietly in.

"Yes, m'sieu'."

"I am expecting a man to-night. When he comes show him up."

"Very well, sir," answered the servant.

"By the way, Pierre, do you remember that peculiar notice in the paper you called my attention to: 'If the man who got off the ship on Broadway on the night of the blizzard, December 24th, will communicate with the —— National Bank, he will hear something to his advantage'?"

"Yes, m'sieu'," replied the valet.

"Well, I know the president, and I was so curious—certainly not a normal characteristic—

that I asked him about it, and my visitor to-night is going to tell me what the advertisement means."

"Quite a romance, m'sieu'," said the valet.

"Perhaps; but I rather fancy a tragedy—we shall see. There he is now, possibly," as the bell rang in an uncertain way, as though not quite sure whether to ring or only tremble. Pierre passed out, and in a few moments returned and held back the curtain, under which a boy passed —a boy so slender, delicate and small, that Pierre wondered that he should have ventured out so cold a night. His face was pale—too pale for health—yet his features were so fine, his eyes so large and lustrous, that he formed a remarkable picture as he stood plainly dazzled by the splendour of it all.

"The young gentleman from Mr. Kidder, sir," announced Pierre.

The artist was evidently astonished, and exclaimed, "A boy!"

"Yes, sir," replied the visitor. "Mr. Kidder said you would see me; I hope I haven't made a mistake"; and a twitching of the mouth and increased pallour told of an over-sensitive nature.

"Not at all—not at all; come right over here," and the artist jumped to his feet and led him to a chair, Pierre putting his hat and coat on the bench. "Somehow I expected to see a man," said Duryea. "I don't know why, as Kidder did not say who was coming, but a person who

wished to engage me to paint a picture and who would explain a certain advertisement about a man getting off a ship on Broadway, which struck me as being very singular and very interesting."

"Mr. Kidder put it in for me," explained the boy; "he was very good to me."

"He has that reputation," said Duryea, smiling and turning his head to catch the boy's earnest face in a different light. "So you can tell me the whole story, can you?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

"Well, then, let us start fairly"; and the artist touched a bell, whereupon, as if by magic, Pierre came in with a waiter, pulled out a teakwood tabouret and placed it at the boy's side, and the waiter on another in front of his master, who in a very short time brewed in a mysterious silver tankard a cup of steaming chocolate, which Pierre handed to the visitor with some delicate crackers.

"Good after a cold walk—eh?" said Duryea, sipping his chocolate.

"Very, sir," replied the boy. Then he began, and told the story again of the ships of the street; of the man he had hailed; of the ten-dollar gold piece, and of his attempts to find the owner—Duryea watching his face from under his hand. Even when he had finished, he said nothing for a moment, and the boy saw that he

was looking into the strange flickering blaze that came from the wood of the whale-ship.

"But where does the picture come in?" he finally asked, looking at the boy, whose face stood out in the gloom like a cameo.

"Why, sir, I thought Mr. Kidder had told you."

"Not about the picture," said the artist; "but you can tell me," he added.

"You see, sir," began the boy, timidly, but with the earnestness which characterised him, "I was afraid I would forget the man's face."

"The man that got off the ship?" suggested his listener.

"Yes, sir. I don't think I shall, but I might, and I didn't want to take any chances, so I asked Mr. Kidder if he knew anybody who would draw me a picture of the sailor for a dollar, that I had saved, and he said he would see; so——"

"So Mr. Kidder selected me, I see," said Duryea, looking very much pleased. "That was very friendly in him; he has thrown a lot of business in my way."

"Here's the money, sir"—holding out the coin.

"Keep it until you get the picture," replied Duryea. "Do you like pictures?" he added.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir. I often look at them through the windows when I'm getting warm over the gratings, uptown."

The new friend took the boy and showed him about the rooms and the studio, and in that

wealth of attractive surroundings the artist thought there was not a more picturesque or beautiful sight than the boy's face, its innocence, its sadness, its incomparable earnestness and ideality, and he made him sit down and repeat the story of the ships again, all the time watching him closely; then he took out a canvas and, with the small figure beside him, began to sketch "The man that got off the ship."

"You say he had a big beard and moustache?"

"Yes, sir; very big," replied the boy.

"Something like this," and the artist outlined his friend Grenfel's face, which came into his mind as having a sweeping beard.

"Yes," the boy assented.

"Brown or black?—eyes far apart, eh?—so?"

"Yes, yes," said the boy, gazing excitedly at the outline, which grew like a miracle. "The very way he looked, always smiling; but I should know him, I think, by his eyes—they were so far apart."

"The nose was slender?"

"Yes, sir."

"And pointed?—and the eyes grey?" said Duryea, still thinking of Colonel Grenfel, and drawing him from memory.

"I think so, sir; and he had on a soft black hat smashed on top and full of snow—I remember that. That's it, the very hat," cried the boy, amazed at the sudden effect of several clever movements of the brush.

"What else, now?" asked the artist.

"He was very red," was the reply.

"I see, but I can't get that until it dries; yes, he had a red complexion," and the artist painted on, putting in the background, touching up the outlines and making the first crude study of a head that so resembled "The man that got off the ship," that the boy was fairly dazed, and Duryea laughed. He had just as a fancy sketched the head of his friend Grenfel, and in some remarkable way it agreed with the boy's description of his friend the sailor.

"When you come again we will go on with it," said the artist. "How would you like to be an artist?"

"I, sir?" said the boy, earnestly. "Oh, if I could! I've often dreamed of it; I have painted in my sleep."

"You painted ships in your mind, too," said Duryea, smiling. "The next time you come I will give you a lesson in painting. You shall be the means of finding your friend. You can pose for me and I will pay you for it."

* * * * * *

J. Austin Kidder, president of the —— National Bank, was dining at the Duryeas'. It was the anniversary of John Duryea's birth, and a large number of friends had come together at Nœmie's invitation to congratulate the man they loved and respected.

Colonel Grenfel took Nœmie in to dinner, and

John Duryea his mother, while Schuyler Morley, Miss Van Zant, Mrs. Bleeker, Miss Vandevoort, Miss Van Rensselaer, Mr. and Mrs. Van Courtland and twenty more followed, all or nearly all excepting Colonel Grenfel bearing names well known in society at the time of Washington, and on Mrs. Washington's lists when she lived and entertained in New York. It was a goodly company to look upon—brave, chivalrous and cultivated men and beautiful women.

"It certainly is a very interesting story," replied Duryea to a question; "but I believe Kidder can tell it better; he came on the scene first."

"I will tell what I know," replied the banker; "then Duryea can supplement it. It is about a very rare personality nowadays—an honest person, desperately, tragically poor"; and he told the story of the boy; of his ships of snow; of his anxiety to meet the man who got off the ship, and his final sending him to Duryea as a customer who was willing to pay a dollar—a point which produced peals of laughter from all but Colonel Grenfel, who, for some unknown reason, could not see the joke, and who looked uncomfortably red.

"Interesting story, isn't it, Colonel?" said Duryea; at which the colonel turned redder than ever, and said he thought it was.

"My part in the little tragedy is very quickly told," said Duryea. "The boy came to my studio

in this house one night in good faith, to get me to paint his friend's picture from his description, and I was delighted with his face. It was beautiful, and the study I have had on exhibition for some time at Glen's is from him. He told me his story, and I saw that he was an artist and poet in embryo. He asked me to begin the painting of his friend, and here comes the remarkable part of it. The boy and his mother were living in terrible poverty, and all at once they began to receive an income and food. A mysterious agent appeared every week, and now they are living comparatively in comfort."

"How delightful! I should like to know that man, Colonel," said Nœmie—"wouldn't you?"

"Oh, there are a lot of people like that, I fancy. If you knew them all, it might not be so nice," was the reply. Nœmie was a little disappointed at the attitude of the colonel; he evidently did not appreciate the poor, or those who succored them.

"But here," continued Duryea, "is the funny part of it. He gave me the general details of the man's appearance, which were sufficiently distinct for me to carry out, and they so closely resembled the facial characteristics of a friend of mine that I made a fairly correct sketch of him, more as a joke than anything else; but, to my amazement, the boy said it was exactly like the sailor who got off the ship. So I worked it up and the boy tells me I have painted the sailor he

is looking for. The picture is in my studio now, and it will give me great pleasure to show it to you."

"I am sorry that I have an engagement which takes me away, Mrs. Duryea," said Colonel Grenfel, as they entered the drawing-room.

"Oh, Colonel, just a second," cried Duryea, as the colonel stepped towards the door—"you must see my picture." Grenfel turned to express his regrets, when Pierre threw open the heavy mahogany doors which led into his master's artistic studio; and there in a brilliant light was a striking picture of "The man who got off the ship."

"Colonel Grenfel!" cried Nœmie.

"Yes, Colonel Grenfel," said Duryea, laughing.

CHAPTER XIII

BIRDS OF PREY

Colonel Grenfel during five or six months had become a friend of the Duryeas, a more or less constant visitor, and Schuyler Morley, and some of John Duryea's old friends, particularly of the fairer sex, noticed that it was not the artist, but his wife, who was the attraction. Indeed, the latter had scores of devotees. Her beauty was universally acknowledged; artists raved over her, and only women gave begrudging recognition to her charms of face and mind.

Nœmie had everything that wealth could command, yet she was not entirely happy. Her husband had not really changed, yet he was not the same lover who had won her. Duryea was an artist and a public man, hence had many things to distract him. He was in constant demand at the clubs, of which he belonged to a score. He was a charming after-dinner speaker, an authority in yachting, art, music, or business; a man of great inherited wealth, he was a bank and insurance director, and, being so all-around a man,

so serviceable and cosmopolitan a person, he could not fail to have constant demands upon his time. It is possible that Nœmie did not understand this, not knowing the insistence of city life on a prominent member of the body politic. Be this as it may, it seemed to her that a subtle something was coming between them. The ardour of his love was not so strong; he did not pay her the same attentions that had characterised their courtship in the Laurentian Mountains.

This was really not true. Nœmie, in the simplicity of her heart, believed that her lover would be always the same. She could not conceive that passionate love underwent a natural drop to normal, and would not always be an element in her husband's affection, and so she began to suspect that possibly he was weary of her; that she lacked some attraction, possibly intellectual, which other women possessed. She noted his regard for Miss Rutherford, and often when he spent an evening at home, which she hoped to enjoy with him alone, he would ask her to send the carriage around for Agnes, "to liven them up," an altogether innocent diversion that Nœmie did not understand. Her love for her husband was such that she scorned the suggestion of complaint, and when he joked or rallied her about being silent or quiet when Agnes was there, playing or singing and looking into her husband's eyes, she merely smiled.

Some interesting women friends of course did not fail to add to her unhappiness, and Miss Van Zant often by subtle innuendo or blank statement suggested that Nœmie ought not to permit the intimacy between her husband and Agnes.

"It's positively a scandal," she said one day, "to see Agnes pretend to forget herself and put her hand on Jack's arm and look at him in her way. I am glad I am not married. I should be in trouble all the time, as I should object to women making love to my husband. I should reserve that prerogative."

"Agnes is a very old friend," said Nœmie, trying bravely to pass it off; but the deadly thrust was biting and cut into her very heart-strings. Often when her husband was away, by a singular coincidence Morley would call. Indeed, one might have thought that someone in the Duryea homestead kept Mr. Morley posted, as he would call for Duryea, and, if he were out, ask for Mrs. Duryea; and so he insidiously became a welcome visitor. He knew Nœmie's troubles, and played to them, and posed as the friend of her husband, who disliked to see him away from home so much.

"Is Jack coming home to-night?" he asked one night.

"I think he has gone to Boston to see Mr. Stratton's new Turner," she replied; "but why do you smile?"

"I was not aware that I did, but I saw Jack and Agnes Rutherford riding downtown in a

cab this afternoon, so I fancy he has given up his Boston trip."

The blow struck home. Nœmie paled and shivered and in her heart put up a little prayer that it was not so, that her husband had not deceived her; and in truth Morley lied—Duryea was in Boston at that very moment.

"I am awfully sorry for you," continued Morley.

"Sorry for me? You must not be," said Nœmie, flushing and starting up. "If Jack was with Agnes he had some good reason for changing his mind."

"All the same, I am sorry for you," continued Morley, "and it's an outrage for Jack to treat you as he does. He has altogether too many women friends who do not know his wife."

"I will not hear a word about my husband," said Nœmie, her eyes filling with tears—"not a word. Will you excuse me?" and she turned, and Pierre, who was taking the butler's place, appeared to show him out.

The valet preceded him to the door, had opened it, when Morley said: "Pierre"—looking him full in the eye threateningly.

"Yes, m'sieu'."

"You have a very strong affection for your master's wife."

"M'sieu'!"

Morley repeated it, laughed in the man's face, adjusted his gloves—taking his time—then

walked out, leaving Pierre trembling with fear and horrified that his secret, which he supposed was still his own, with the exception of Julie, should be guessed by another, and he immediately began to accuse himself. It was possible that M. Morley had been as keen as Julie, and had read his heart through his eyes.

Pierre had remained faithful to his determination. He had never coveted his master's wife. He had rarely, if ever, permitted himself to think of it, and then unfortunately he had been seen by Julie; but as he did not know how he had been observed, he concluded that she had cleverly read his eyes when he was looking at Nœmie; hence he had tried to make it a practice not to look at her—a self-applied penance.

Julie's love for Pierre did not diminish—it increased in fervour day by day, week by week—and every act and glance of Pierre's was misconstrued and contorted by the jealous woman, who had no conception of his real thoughts, the extreme penance he was successfully undergoing, or the future in the church he was laying out for himself and honestly preparing for.

That Pierre avoided her, that he would not look at her or take the slightest advantage of the many opportunities which she arranged to fall in his way, were only so many assurances that he loved his mistress.

She conceived that Nœmie must have some affection for him, an idea which grew and was

fostered until the girl really believed that her mistress was a master at cleverness and intrigue, merely because she, Julie, could never catch her in any kind of an indiscretion.

It was Nœmie's custom to have Julie dress her hair, while looking in a tall glass; and here Julie would bring the conversation around to Pierre, and watch her mistress for some flash of the eye, for some flushing or token of interest which, believing that Nœmie was too clever for her, never came; and so she grew to hate her and to plot and scheme against her.

Julie had begun to write to Morley and post him as to Duryea's movements. Whenever Morley received a note with nothing but the letter X in it, he knew by arrangement that his friend Jack Duryea was to be away from home the following night, and nothing transpired which was not repeated. She played Morley against Pierre, and Morley added to the fire of her suspicions by constant suggestion that Pierre and Nœmie were too clever for her; and so, between two fires, the jealous, unbalanced woman became crazed with jealousy and unrequited love, and constantly watched for an opportunity to strike down her victim like a hawk.

The clouds seemed to be gathering about the fair head of Nœmie, whose perfect unconsciousness made her a more or less easy victim.

Morley had met with more than one rebuff. His plan of attack had been to create a suspi-

cion in the mind of Nœmie that her husband was weary of her; and so colossal was his egotism, so successful had he been with many women of many different types, that he could not believe that his suit would not be favoured; so he determined on a final move at the first opportunity, which soon came.

Mrs. Duryea had issued invitations for a ball, and, during this evening, Morley had danced with Nœmie and under the excuse of the heat took her into the splendid palm-room and seated her in a secluded corner. After some conversation, he said: "Jack was in my room last night and after he went home I found this where his coat had been. Is it one of your letters?"

Nœmie took it, and a glance showed it was an impassioned letter from some woman to her husband, referring to a meeting they had had.

"Did you read it?" asked Nœmie, deathly pale.

"I could not help it," replied Morley, his face aflame with a good imitation of outraged friendship. "It is too much."

Nœmie had buried her face in her hands, and, carried away by his fathomless egotism, the man threw his arm about her, and said:

"Nœmie, can you not see that someone loves you? Why submit yourself to these insults from your husband, who passes his time with other women who laugh at you? I love you, Nœmie, more than I can tell. Come with me and we

will leave all this behind. My yacht is at the foot of the street ready. I——"

Nœmie had been so amazed, so utterly astonished by his words, that for a second she was incapable of action, and a blank look of horror filled her eyes as she struggled from his grasp and rose to her feet; then, mistaking her hesitation, blinded by his boundless egotism, Morley threw his arm about her, drew her to him and kissed her full upon the lips, again and again.

Nœmie struck him full in the face with her clenched hand, pushed him away with a scream of fear and loathing, and, pointing to the door, said: "Leave this house or I will disclose this shameless insult to every guest."

"When I go, you will go," said Morley, an ugly, brutal light in his eyes; "and let me tell you, Pierre stays here." But in that moment of deadly insult, he caught a startled expression in her eyes, and, looking over his shoulder, Morley turned to find himself face to face with Colonel Grenfel. The next instant the colonel's right arm shot out, and Morley went down miserably, striking so hard that his body actually slid under the floral rack, bringing down the palms and other plants upon him with a crash, which brought a score of guests running from the ballroom, while Nœmie, nearly fainting, sank into the seat.

"Mr. Morley must have slipped. He fell with great violence; perhaps he had a stroke or a fit,"

said Colonel Grenfel, picking him up. "You slipped, didn't you, Morley?" said the colonel, gripping him hard, then whispering in his ear: "Say you slipped, you dog, or I will wring your neck."

"Yes, I must have slipped," said Morley, struggling to his feet. "I had a slight vertigo, fell and struck my chin. I have cut myself, but it is nothing. I am sorry to have created a sensation. Good-night, Mrs. Duryea."

Nœmie rose and bowed, and the guests looked at her pale face in amazement. Possibly some believed the story—at least all pretended to—and Morley passed out, found his carriage, and rode home with fear and rage in his heart—not so much at the blow, but at the threat that Grenfel had whispered in his ear. The best swordsman, the best amateur boxer and all-round athlete was to have his neck wrung like a chicken, and, to make matters worse, Morley believed that this extraordinary man could do it. It was a very disagreeable day and week for Mr. Morley, but it should be said that he was not discouraged.

"Is Morley subject to fits?" inquired Colonel Grenfel an hour later in the smoking-room.

"Not that I am aware," replied Duryea.

"He went down like a log," said the colonel. "Extraordinary, wasn't it?"

"He frightened my wife almost into a collapse.

She had to retire," said Duryea. "She seemed very nervous over it."

"I hear you are from the cotton belt, Colonel," said Mr. Remsen, a big shipping merchant, lighting a cigar.

"I have lived in all the Southern States; but I am a wanderer now," replied Colonel Grenfel.

"We are having a strange experience in the cotton business," continued Mr. Remsen. "This accident of Morley's recalls it. Morley has lost over half a million sterling this year in cotton. It has demoralised the trade in our English shipments."

"How so?" asked Colonel Grenfel, rubbing his second knuckle, which seemed to give him pain.

"In wrecks," replied the merchant. "Four vessels, sailing for New Orleans this year, with cotton for Liverpool, have either been wrecked or have disappeared, and last month the officers of one of our ships came to us and made affidavit that there was a gang of pirates or wreckers working off the Florida Keys, in the interest of plunder."

"I should think that could be easily managed," said the colonel, "especially if it was true."

"You might think so," was the reply; "but we believe the agents of the fellows ship on vessels and stand in with the wreckers. We have an extraordinary statement regarding a gigantic leader, a man about your size, I should say. A reckless fellow, who dominates the piratical

gang. Confidentially, we are going to send out a dummy cotton ship, loaded with men, and do them up. Morley is to have charge of it. He has lost so much that he is really worried, and I don't blame him."

"When does the armada sail?" asked the colonel, lighting a cigar at the candle, and puffing a blue ring into the air.

"Of course, this is confidential," said Mr. Remsen, looking around.

"I should think that was the essence of it," replied the colonel. "If it got into the papers, for instance, the wreckers might not wreck, eh?"

"Exactly," replied Mr. Remsen, in a low tone of voice. "They undoubtedly have a perfect organisation, and when they mark a ship as their prey, they undoubtedly ship men in her."

"The infernal scoundrels!" said the colonel, with a laugh. "Some master mind is behind them, eh?"

"Undoubtedly. There is no question but that some long-headed fellow is back of them, and for the past year they seem to have discriminated against Morley. Other vessels get through, but if Morley owns a bale, something is sure to happen."

"Morley may have enemies, though one can hardly imagine it," said the colonel, looking interested.

"It does look that way," said his companion; "but he goes in this ship, and, being a fellow of

intense persistency and resourcefulness, he will doubtless land them."

"I have observed Morley's persistency," said the colonel, looking up at the big chandelier, and closing one eye. "It's a winning card, sometimes. When did you say his expedition sails?"

"On the 19th of March," said Mr. Remsen, lowering his voice, as a party came into the room.

"The 19th of March," repeated Colonel Grenfel; "that is a favourite date with me, Remsen," turning his big black eyes upon the banker. "Do you remember that night at the Maypole, in 'Barnaby Rudge,' where Long Phil Parkes, Mr. Cobb and old John Willett are sitting in the Maypole and Solomon Daisy comes in, frightened half out of his wits? It's one of the cleverest and most delightful things Dickens ever did. Solomon is provided with a bumper of brandy and water, then breaks out as follows:

"'Oh, Johnny!' says Solomon, shaking him by the hand; 'oh, Parkes! oh, Tommy Cobb! why did I leave this house to-night, on the 19th of March?—of all nights in the year, on the 19th of March!'

"It would be hard luck, indeed, if Morley would find it as unfortunate a date as Solomon Daisy, who saw the ghost of a dead man. I well remember it," said the colonel, laughing heartily at the remembrance of Solomon Daisy, or something else equally as funny, "and shall watch with interest the results of Morley's expedition.

Oh, those delightful old fellows—Long Phil Parkes and Tommy Cobb!" and the colonel relapsed into musing, and remained quiet so long, that the banker, thinking he had dropped asleep, rose and walked out.

CHAPTER XIV

THE 19TH OF MARCH

THE levee at New Orleans was packed with bales of cotton, piled in great hills and mountains, each marked with the name of some vessel lying along the river bank. Most of these were river steamers, gorgeous in glass, lace curtains and gilt, their big stern-wheels, the airy wooden fabric, the tall smokestacks and gorgeous decorations making them picturesque objects of interest. Some were leaving, backing out into the amber-hued stream; others coming in from up the river, lowering their big gangplanks, over which gangs of shouting, burly negroes ran, beginning the unloading process almost as soon as they touched the wharf.

As one of these floating palaces, the *Prairie Queen,* came in, one Gaston Ferrello, a Portuguese half-breed, slipped aboard to advance the interest of his sailors' hotel—the Hotel Ferrello, No. 10, on the levee—by the distribution of cards, and an hour later he might have been seen with a somewhat bibulous individual on his arm, having bagged his game.

The Hotel Ferrello had a name that was distinctly in disfavour with the police, as it was the resort of suspicious characters of all kinds. The lower floor was occupied by the long and gaudy bar, with lengths of glass ornamented by some artist in soap, and back among the bottles were many trophies of the sea: a big saw-fish, a spectral man-of-war bird and a skull bearing an arrow, shot into it ages ago by some early American. Leading from the bar was a passage which passed into a ball-room, where a band of negroes played and led a nightly revelry of men and women.

On the night in question M. Delmas, the agent of Messrs. Calvé et Cie, Shippers, might have been seen drinking with M. Ferrello, and eyeing his absinthe with the air of a connoisseur.

"Well, Gaston, it is understood. I want forty good sailors. I don't care so much for their morals, you understand"; and M. Delmas laughed at his little joke as to their staying qualities.

"If that is the case," said Ferrello, "it is an easy matter. I have been hiding ten or a dozen men for a week. I think they are guilty of all the crimes on the calendar; but they have money, and——"

"And you don't want them to go until it is used up," said M. Delmas. "Why not rob them to-night and do it all at one time?"

"You are a mind-reader," said Ferrello, grin-

ning. "Your keen perception does you infinite credit. That fellow"—pointing to a man near them with frowsselled head upon his arms—"cannot hear us—can he?"

"He is as drunk as the father of Bacchus, and, more, cannot speak French. Trust me for knowing my guests," said the keeper of the place, with a wink.

"Very well," rejoined M. Delmas, "we want forty men for a barque which sails from Mobile on the 19th of March. They must not know the ship until they are aboard. We pay their expenses from here to Mobile and their pay begins at once; twenty will be landed at Havana, to reship on another vessel. The usual commission and a bonus of 500 francs is yours."

"Good," said Ferrello. "You shall have them."

Delmas went home, and Ferrello shook the drunken sailor by the arm. "Wake up, compadre"; but the man was sound asleep, and it required much effort to arouse him, and then he staggered to his feet and demanded where he was.

"Have you any money, compadre?" asked Ferrello, after vigorously shaking the man. The other graciously vouchsafed to wake up, and, after eyeing M. Ferrello a moment and evidently not impressed, said huskily: "Why, Mr. Landshark, that depends upon whether you have left me anything."

Ferrello laughed. It was impossible to hurt his feelings.

The man looked at the proprietor a moment, then thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a dollar, gazed at it long and tenderly, and laid it on the table, adding, dramatically: "The last of an ill-spent fortune."

"Do you want a ship, brother?" asked Ferrello.

"Are you my long-lost brother?"

"Not exactly," said Ferrello; "but I can get you a good job if you are an able seaman."

"Not at present, noble friend of Bacchus," said the seaman, leaning against the table and fixing two very bright, shrewd, half-closed eyes, not drunken eyes by any means, upon the proprietor. "Not at present; but when I have spent that five-franc piece, or, to be accurate, in about ten minutes, I shall want a ship, and, by the Monte Diablo, I shall want it very, very bad. Five francs stands between me and the condition known as 'dead broke.'"

"You are a queer fellow," said Ferrello, with a laugh; "but when the ten minutes is up I can give you a good job on an easy ship."

"Give me a quart of Sancho Fino, a plate of soup, a package of cigars," said the man, "and ask one of the ladies if she will join me. I will celebrate. That is my present humour."

"Have you any friends who want to ship?"

asked Ferrello, taking the dollar which the man pushed at him.

"Men?—dozens," responded the man.

"How many can you round up by the 19th of March?" continued Ferrello.

"A dozen or so. The whole ship's crew of the barque *Clytie* is over at Pensacola, getting rid of the surplus," said the man.

Ferrello reached into his pocket and pulled out a twenty-dollar gold piece and laid it down. "There's a month's advance for you. Have the men at Mobile on the 19th ready, and there'll be another double eagle for you. Make your stay here in the meantime as my guest, monsieur."

And so it happened that on the 19th of March the ship *San Geronimo,* loaded with cotton, lay at the dock in Mobile ready to sail. Ferrello had delivered the men, and M. Delmas and Mr. Schuyler Morley were about to go aboard.

"You are sure of all these men, Gaston? None of them knew in what ship they were going?"

"Not one, on my honour," said the runner.

"On your honour?" repeated M. Delmas.

"Yes. Monsieur forgets that there is even honour among thieves."

"I had forgotten that," said M. Delmas, smiling; "but I have no doubt that it is all right."

"All looks well, monsieur," said Delmas to Morley, as the latter was about to go up the gangplank.

"It couldn't be better," was the reply. "The

captain and mate of the old *Kelton,* that I am sure was deliberately wrecked by this gang, have turned wreckers at my suggestion, and will work from Key West and get at the inside of this. The difficult part of it is, that apparently everything is carried out in a lawful manner. We can't prove that anything is wrong. Opportune gales seem to come up; ships spring a leak mysteriously and are wrecked. The wreckers appear to have some seventh sense, which enables them to locate a wreck as soon as she strikes, and the first wrecker on the spot gets the lion's share of salvage, and the admiralty court deals it out. If these ships are purposely wrecked—and I am sure they are—it is done so cleverly that only the devil himself can find it out."

"But you, monsieur, you will unearth them," said M. Delmas, without the faintest shadow of a smile.

Morley eyed the Frenchman a second, but concluded that he was too stupid to have intended a joke at his expense, so laughed as he replied: "We shall see," and went aboard the *San Geronimo.*

"Adieu, M. Morley. Bon voyage to you."

A fussy little tug came alongside, a hawser was paid out and made fast, and in a few moments the big ship began to move into the stream and head out to sea. The men went aloft and broke out the sails, which fell about her like a cloud from the sky, and she was soon under sail.

Morley had found it convenient to leave New York for the time, enraged at his failure with Nœmie and the treatment he had received at the hands of Colonel Grenfel. He determined to drop out of sight, not knowing how much publicity would be given the incident, hence the present trip, one of adventure possibly, fell directly into line with his feelings.

He had mysteriously lost a fortune during the past year. Ship after ship had been wrecked until it was theoretically demonstrable that it was not accidental but intentional, and Morley had determined to solve the question if he could. So he had loaded the ship with cotton, shipped sixty men who were to be armed, and prepared to see for himself what the trouble was.

On the following morning he called the crew aft, and addressed them:

"Men, within two years a number of ships have been wrecked, looted and robbed in the Gulf, and I propose to see how it is done. If this ship is attacked I propose to fight it out, and you men will receive sums running from five to ten times your pay if you will stand by me. How do you feel about it?"

A big red-faced sailor swung his hat and called for three cheers, in which the men joined, and one after another they filed up and signed papers to stand by the ship no matter what came. Morley then ordered the canvas to be removed from a lot of cotton amidships and displayed

cutlasses and guns, and told the men that, at the word, they were to arm themselves and do as he said. He drilled them in the act of repelling boarders and was well satisfied with the outlook.

They had fair winds, and, with a cloud of sail, went bowling over the Gulf. On the third day the barometer began to drop, and on the fourth the wind hauled around to the south dead ahead and began to blow, and the ship was soon close-hauled on double-reefed topsails, the wind and sea rising, but, despite their jamming her into the wind, she was beaten away and made bad weather of it.

The gale increased rapidly, and every man of the big crew was called to reduce sail. The barometer was dropping. The cry: "All hands on deck—reduce sail!" came on the wings of a terrific squall, and had the helmsman not spilled her sails just as he did, they would have been blown away; as it was, she went over until the weather boats hung, keel to the deck, slowly righting while the men piled up into the rigging on the weather side to go aloft.

The wind blew so hard that it was difficult for the men to move. They were beaten flat against the shrouds, the breath almost torn from their mouths, while the wind played an awful requiem as it whistled, screamed and moaned through the standing rigging. The ship was now under very little sail, yet making bad weather.

Perhaps the reader has tried to furl sail, as

has the author, on a big ship in a gale of wind, and knows the peculiar difficulties which attend it. The sky seemed to come down and envelop the royal-yards, and when the ship rolled like a vast over-weighted pendulum, it seemed as though she would never recover. The men did the work by a peculiar intuition sailormen must have, as it was intensely dark, the air full of spume, rain and cloud, and as they lay out to port and starboard, along the foot-ropes, they were obliged to cling to the lines for their lives to prevent being blown off.

The great sails were like steel, and only when the men at the helm spilled them could they be hauled in. There were already two reefs in the topsails and the clewlines and buntlines were hauled to their full limit of endurance; but as the ship luffed, and the steel-like canvas lost the wind and cracked like the report of a gun, the men bent to it and, aided by clewlines and buntlines, hauled it up struggling, waving, bellowing like a demon endowed with life; held to it with hands, feet and teeth, caught it foot by foot above a roar and turmoil that Hades alone could reproduce; but they held on and inch by inch, foot by foot, the fore-, main- and mizzen-topsails were furled.

The men laid slowly in, beaten flat, cowed by the black clouds that went dashing by, opening now and then to display the cold, gleaming moon, then shutting it out, as though the end of all

things had come, the end of time and eternity. Every rope, shroud, brace, stay and halyard bent to leeward in great half circles, and when the ship fell to windward and was hurled back again the weight of the cordage threatened to dismast her. Brave men laid in that day from the yard-arms—men reckless of life, men who had been battered by a thousand storms; yet they huddled on the tops, some in the lubber's hole, some beaten against the futtock shrouds, waiting for the word to lie down below or for the chance. They were appalled by the sight. The two men at the wheel, lashed on, were holding the ship up, jamming her into the wind; yet every sea that struck her weather-bow went clear over her and swept the top with blinding spume, that in vivid golden streams ran down the stays in rivulets of fire. The ship was soon as naked as a winter aspen, down to the close-reefed maintopsail and a diminutive storm staysail, and was now bending, lee scuppers deep in the surge, almost beaten under water by the force and roar of the wind, so that when the wild cry came, "lay down!" the men hesitated, and clung where they were, expecting every moment to go with the masts. One by one they came down, the wind beating them against the cordage and blowing, snatching their breath away, sweeping them with sleet and foam. One by one they reached the deck, which was a boiling seething maelstrom, to cling to life-lines and wait for the end.

All through the night the hurricane blew, the wind was constantly shifting, taking the ship aback and veering from point to point and back again. Morning found them lying up to it, drifting to leeward, with no means of telling how far they had gone.

At two bells the glass was stationary, and the wind began to blow out, but the sea was heavier than ever, and owing to the change of wind it was running across, like great mountain ranges, a maze of peaks, divides and green hollows. When the ship plunged into one of these abysmal regions the helmsmen could see waves over the topsail-yard, and the grinding and creaking roar which came as she struck seemed the wail from some stricken monster. Another day passed, and the sea began to go down, the ship hauling around to the westward so that she could lie southwest on her course to clear the keys. Every man on the ship was worn out, having had no sleep, and so it happened that when the first officer found that she was a point or two off her course, he merely called the attention of the man at the wheel to it.

Gradually they got on more sail, and at night when the mate awoke and looked up at the compass over his head he saw that the ship was again off her course. He went on deck and found her with topgallantsails on, staysail and spanker. He called the attention of the man at the wheel to her course, and the fellow replied

there must be something the matter with the steering gear, as she continually fell away.

All this time, Morley, being ill, had kept to the cabin, but now he came out, looking a little pale, and interested himself in the ship and with the captain studied the chart. That night the captain figured that they were to the northwest of Sand Key about fifty miles, their drift at thirty. The weather was threatening, so he took in royals and topgallantsails, and the vessel was making good weathering when at a few minutes before eight bells the watch in the forecastle sang out: "Land!" That moment the ship struck and came-to so suddenly that the foretopmast and maintopgallant mast were literally jerked out of her, and went by the board over the port quarter in a confused mass.

Morley was standing on the quarter-deck at the time, and was thrown down by the shock, striking the man at the wheel, who turned a half somersault as the wheel jerked over. The first mate and captain sprang forward, and work was begun at once to clear the wreck. By morning they had a clear deck and it was seen that the ship was fast on a reef running out from Marquesas; the ship had missed her course by at least thirty-four miles.

"How do you explain this?" asked Morley of the captain.

"I can't explain it, sir," said the skipper. "We

have made forty more miles leeway than I can account for."

"We're on to stay," said Morley.

"It looks to me that way," replied the captain; "but we are only about thirty miles from Key West. I will take a boat and go for help, and we can save the cargo."

"Sail—o-o-o!" shouted the watch—"sail—o-o-o!" and over to the east, like two gulls, they saw two vessels coming down on them, wing and wing.

"Wreckers, you bet your life," said the captain.

"No wrecker comes aboard this ship," said Morley.

"You can't stop them," said the captain.

"Lay aft here, all hands!" cried Morley, and as the men came up he told them to arm themselves.

Old Bill Mathews lifted the tarpaulin off the armoury, but there was nothing there.

"I reckon your armoury went overboard in the gale, sir," he said with a grin. "She was swept clean."

Gradually it dawned upon Morley that he had been overreached, as a sea could not throw heavy guns over the rail. It was evident that the armoury had been tossed overboard during the storm; the wreckers' men were on the ship. In the meantime the schooners rounded up, dropped

anchor about a hundred yards from them, and, manning their boats, came alongside.

"I reckon you folks are in need of help," said the captain of one.

"That's where you are mistaken," said Morley. "When we want aid we'll let you know."

"I'll come aboard and talk to you about it." The man made a movement to climb over the side.

"You stick your head over that rail and I'll crack it," said Morley, seizing a belaying-pin.

The man hesitated a moment, then dropped back, and the wreckers rowed away and went aboard their own vessel.

"Sail—o-o-o!" shouted the watch, and away on the horizon another sail was seen hovering like a laughing gull; and they kept coming until the *San Geronimo* was surrounded by a fleet of twenty wreckers. At six bells they came at the ship in a body, climbed aboard forward, aft, abeam, and poured into the ship like rats; and with them came the mate and captain of the old *Kelton.*

Morley rallied his men with the captain, and the two parties came together with a crash and roar; but someone from behind tapped Morley on the head with a bar, possibly by accident, and he lay for dead in the sun, and his men, not seeing why they should fight against hope, threw down their arms.

Morley came to himself as a tall man with

smooth red cheeks, apparently the leader, turned him over in no gentle fashion with his boot; as he looked up he imagined he was looking into the eyes of Colonel Grenfel, but the wrecker had no beard and presented an altogether different appearance.

"Take this chap into the cabin," said the leader in a deep voice that startled Morley; "and if he does anything, knock him on the head. He seems to be a trouble-maker."

Two men took Morley and carried him in and laid him on a bunk and left him. One of the men who carried the wounded owner in was the man whom M. Ferrello had hired to collect seamen for the *San Geronimo* in New Orleans. As he came out he walked up to the big man and said: "Captain, I have a letter for you. I will drop it in the binnacle."

A few moments later the wrecker strolled by the binnacle, and leaning over as if to look at it, took out a greasy and much soiled envelope. Going to the rail he opened it and read in French:

"Quebec, May 27, 1848.

"M. Foster: The daughter of Toussaint Réval has returned to him."

The wrecker tore the letter in fine pieces and dropped them overboard, and the expression in his powerful, leonine face was not a pleasant one. "I have a mind to go below and shoot him,"

he said. "But no—he may live to be hanged before the public. We will give him plenty of rope." Captain Foster for some reason entertained a strong prejudice against Morley.

The dismantling of the ship proceeded, and she was stripped with a rapidity that showed skill on the part of the man of twenty or more vessels. The crew of the *San Geronimo* were forced to work, and when the wrecking was accomplished they were sent aboard a schooner and the fleet sailed.

"You don't mean to leave Mr. Morley aboard, do you?" said the captain to the head wrecker.

"It looks that way. He has the dinghy and a suit of sails and plenty of grub and water. If he can't sail twenty or thirty miles on her, why," said the big man after a pause, "let him drown."

As the schooners got under way, Morley came staggering on deck, and, seeing that he was being deserted, practically marooned, he shook his fist at the departing vessels.

He knew that Key West lay to the eastward twenty-five or thirty miles, and, seeing that he had a small boat, he bided his time. There was no evidence of a storm, the glass was stationary, and a key was near at hand; so he rested in the cabin. He found that his wound was only superficial, though painful, and in two days he was himself again. He surmised that the men would come back for the copper after the ship had gone to pieces, so he determined to disap-

point them at least. He rigged a fall, brought the dinghy alongside and loaded her with provisions, which he rowed to the nearest key. The next trip he carried canvas and towed in a spare royal-yard or two; and by working continually, he succeeded in two or three days in fitting out a camp to keep him for several weeks. His last trip was for water, and he towed in two barrels, and, having a small condenser, was well equipped. Then he returned and fired the ship; but he was too late. A heavy gale came on that night, and blew a norther for three days, during which the *San Geronimo* was broken into firewood and the beach of the key lined with the wreckage. He was able to haul the dinghy on the beach and so saved her. On this desert key Morley was marooned for a month, living on his food supply, but mostly on turtle and fish which he could catch.

He had ample time to think. The weather was too uncertain, the sea too heavy to escape in the dinghy, and the more he put this and that together, remembering the interest Grenfel had in Nœmie, her evident regard for him, his peculiar interruption at the ball, all convinced Morley that Grenfel was Nœmie's lover—a natural conclusion for a degenerate to arrive at. He judged the work and actions of others by himself. He also concluded that in some way Grenfel was connected with the wreckers. Colonel Grenfel was supposed in New York to be a man

of vast wealth, but no one knew much about him. The strong resemblance between Grenfel and the wrecker was too suggestive not to be taken into account. Perhaps the wrecker was Grenfel's brother, perhaps the two were the same man; yet this was too wild and impossible. It might easily happen in a novel, but in real life it was improbable. Yet Morley believed that he was involved in a singular mystery which included a dual personality.

Many charges might have been laid at the door of Schuyler Morley, but he was not a coward, and Colonel Grenfel had been right when he accorded to the cotton broker persistency of no low order. Morley was insistently persistent. His love for Nœmie grew apace, and the thought that Grenfel might be her lover aroused a very demon in him, and he determined to return if he could and make another effort to get her by fair means or foul. This desire became a fever that tortured him like an evil spirit, and the stormy days which kept him marooned on the reef were cursed and bewailed. On the first calm day he stocked the dinghy with provisions and water, stepped the spritsail, took the oars and rowed and sailed away to the east, and, having a fair wind and smooth sea, he reached Key West by midnight. He landed and hired a Conch to row him over to the salt works on the north of Key West, from which late at night he made his way down to the city.

CHAPTER XV

THE STRIKE OF THE HAWK

THE letter which Schuyler Morley showed to Nœmie, presumably a communication referring to some meeting between her husband and a woman, would have failed completely with a more worldly woman. It was a crude, brutal effort suggestive of a sensational novel, but was exactly the kind of slung-shot that would crush this pure and guileless woman who in all her life had never heard of forgery or the methods of an utterly desperate and commonplace libertine in the guise of a gentleman. It never occurred to her that the letter might be a gross forgery; her attitude was that she was determined not to entertain an evil or suspicious thought against her husband, merely because it was wrong to do so, so she dropped the letter into the fire and prayed that night that her husband might be protected from all enemies.

It so happened that at this time Duryea was engaged with many interests and much preoccupied, and in various ways the thought en-

tered Nœmie's mind that her husband might possibly be disappointed in her—she differed from those with whom he had always lived, and it is not impossible that some of Duryea's friends of the gentler sex may have thrown out some subtle suggestion that Nœmie was not interested in his lines of thought in art or literature. Be this as it may, Duryea knew that Nœmie had her friends, and he would have been the most surprised of husbands to have been told that his wife was unhappy over any neglect of his. Of a thoroughly artistic temperament, loving ease and living the life of a dilettante, possibly thoughtless, he supposed that his wife was completely happy as the centre of a social life which had no counterpart in America at the time, nor has had since.

But Nœmie was not a conventional woman of fashion; she had been brought up in the forests like a wild bird. Her education had been received in Tadousac in the convent overlooking the great river, and the good sisters had taught her all the arts of French society, but none of its follies. She was well read in the best sense, but innocent of guile; she had been taught not to think evil; she had never read evil books; she was pure of heart, sweet, and always womanly, not designed to wage a successful contest against the wiles and plots of a female Machiavelli with the jealousy of a Cleopatra.

Pierre, aware of the affection which Julie entertained for him, knowing to what it would lead,

regarded it and her with horror, while his love for Nœmie had been crushed by his will-power, reënforced by the influence of the church, and was replaced by a loyal affection which revolted at the very thought of love for another.

Without Nœmie there was nothing for him, and by persistent mental and spiritual will-power and prayer he had come to regard the situation with complacency. The approaches of Julie filled him with disgust, which was shown to her through his eyes alone. He avoided, repulsed her, despite her threats, a system of treatment which drove the jealous girl to the greatest extremes, and warped her judgment to an extraordinary and fatal degree.

Pierre had watched the career of his master's wife with eager interest, and when he saw her neglected, he resented it. He rose and fell, a human barometer, a loyal slave, a dog in his faithful affection, all of which Julie observed. She could make him pale or blush by the mention of her mistress' name, or some anecdote about her, and she played upon him and wreaked her rage upon him with all the deftness of a clever woman.

When she told Pierre that Nœmie had contracted pneumonia and was very ill, when she had but a cold, Pierre turned pale, to redden as the maid laughed at him and held him up to scorn. She tried hard to enrage him, taunted and threatened him, to all of which Pierre did

not respond; he merely prayed for Julie at night —it was a part of his justly assumed penance.

The peculiar attitude of the man she loved, aided by the clever suggestion of Morley, finally forced Julie to believe that Pierre was a marvel of cleverness; that he was really in his mistress' confidence, her *de facto* lover, and the thought, born of lies, nurtured by impossibility and hatred, so grew upon her that she became desperate and was in constant search for some opening, some means by which she could involve her mistress and Pierre in common ruin.

Her first attempt was to send an anonymous note to Mrs. John Provost Duryea, the mother of the artist, to the effect that Pierre was an old lover of Nœmie; that it would be well to be on the watch or the family would be involved in a disgraceful scandal.

Mrs. Duryea took the letter to her son, who, to her horror, laughed at it. Then he told his mother the whole story, but she was not satisfied, and a suspicion of her daughter-in-law became fixed in her mind, as a menace to the family honour, and she demanded that her son should discharge Pierre from his service. This too was met with laughter.

"Why, mother, Pierre is preparing for the church. I know all about it, and I shall not annoy Nœmie with the suggestion of such a thing; that is an old story, gone and past."

"Pierre does not strike me as a St. Anthony,"

replied his mother, "and your wife is certainly not the kind of a woman to inspire hatred."

"There is where you do him an injustice," replied her son. "I assure you, mother, it is absurd."

It was then that Mrs. John Provost Duryea for the first time in her life fell from grace—she took the matter in her own hands, and at the first opportunity interviewed Julie, her daughter-in-law's servant, and this interesting and clever young woman, without saying a word against her mistress, succeeded in convincing Mrs. Duryea that there was cause for suspicion; the latter asked the girl to keep her eyes open, and post her of any movement open to any suspicious interpretation on the part of her son's valet. Julie, whose mind was of the cheap theatric order, was now in position to make another move on the human chess-board, and she proceeded without hesitation.

A man called one day and asked for Pierre. The latter responded, and was told that his master wished to meet him at a certain number on West Ninth Street at three o'clock, and desired him to bring a certain book on art—a not unusual request, though Pierre for the moment thought it strange that his master did not write a note. It was then two o'clock and Pierre left at once. A few moments later a messenger came with a note to Nœmie. Julie carried it up and handed it to her mistress, whom she was dress-

ing. Nœmie glanced at it and said: "Hurry, Julie; Mr. Duryea wishes me to meet him promptly at three—to see a new picture, I suppose."

The maid aided her mistress rapidly, and succeeded in tossing something over the note and envelope, which later she threw into the fire; then putting on her hat and cloak, she ran around to the elder Mrs. Duryea, who, by an unfortunate chance, was just starting out on a series of calls.

"Madame," whispered the girl, trembling at the enormity of her coup, "I can tell you nothing, only I beg of you drive at once to number — West Ninth Street, conceal yourself near at hand and wait and see who comes out"; then she turned and fled.

Mrs. Duryea was astonished, but as she had made the initiative, had started the investigation and could but go ahead, she ordered her coachman to drive to the corner of Ninth Street and University Place. Here she alighted, and walked down the street on the south side, until she came to the number. It was a small brick house of very ordinary appearance. There was a druggist's shop nearly opposite; Mrs. Duryea entered, ordered something, and asked if she might await a friend there and sat down, a grim watcher of number —.

Pierre reached the house before the time appointed and told the slatternly girl who opened the door that he had come to meet Mr. Duryea. He was shown into a dingy parlour, in the corner

of which sat a little, old woman, dressed for the street, intently reading a book. As Pierre came in she looked up and Pierre said: "Pardon, madame, can you tell me if Mr. Duryea has arrived?"

"No, I cannot," replied the old lady, with some asperity.

In a few moments the bell rang again, there was a rustle of silks, and Pierre looked up and sprang to his feet—the slouching, grinning girl was showing in his master's wife.

"Pierre! Why are you here?" exclaimed Nœmie, very much astonished.

"Monsieur sent word for me to be here at three with this book, madame," Pierre replied.

"I see," said Nœmie. "He sent me a note to meet him at the same time. I fancy he has discovered a new picture." This was in French; the old lady in the corner glanced repeatedly at the two over her book, but they held no more conversation. As the moments slipped away, Nœmie became restless.

"Perhaps I have made a mistake, Pierre," she said finally, looking in her bag; "but I have left Mr. Duryea's note at home."

"I will see the proprietor," said Pierre, and he walked out into the hall.

"Pardon me, you do not know if Mr. Duryea is expected here, madame?" said Nœmie to the old lady.

"No. I do not keep run of the guests of this

place," was the cool reply. "Who is Mr. Duryea?"

"My husband," replied Nœmie, sweetly.

"Your husband?" repeated the old lady.

At this moment Pierre returned with a woman.

"No, sir, I don't know Mr. Duryea, and I never heard of him. People don't generally tell me their names who come here."

Pierre felt a cold icy chill creeping over him.

"Madame," he said to Nœmie, "I think we are mistaken—we will go, if you please," and he opened the door, attended her to the street, and, making an excuse that he was obliged to go downtown, walked in the opposite direction.

Mrs. John Provost Duryea was still sitting in the shop as they came down the steps together. She almost fainted—the horror of the situation was too much for her. When Nœmie had passed, she turned to the druggist and said:

"I beg your pardon, but can you tell me who lives in number —?"

The man bit his lips, hesitated, and then said: "No, lady, I cannot; the place has an unpleasant reputation."

Mrs. Duryea bowed her head in utter shame and walked out, and, finding her carriage, drove home. She then at once walked around to her son's house.

"Mrs. Duryea has just come in, madame," said Julie, her face deathly pale.

"Run downstairs, if you please; I wish to see Mrs. Duryea alone."

The girl obeyed, slunk down the stairway like an evil thing, holding on to the rail, clinging to it in terror, listening, trembling, hysterical, wishing to scream aloud at her mad fancies. Like a hawk that has struck down a bird she gloated over the victory one moment, then suggestions of repentance came trooping through her brain, followed by fear. But she had burnt the note; there was nothing to do but lie, and lie, and lie, and look innocent; and she could do that—Morley had told her the stage had lost a great actress when she decided to become a maid, and Julie believed it; and she walked into the drawing-room, dropped down on a divan and looked at her face in the pier glass, as she had a thousand times, and laughed at her cleverness.

"Ah, mother," said Nœmie, rising as Mrs. Duryea came in, "I am glad to see you. Did John tell you where——"

"It is about my son I wish to speak to you. May I sit down?"

Something in the woman's voice chilled Nœmie, and she sank into a chair, fastening her eyes on the strong, patrician face of the elder woman.

"Nœmie, you, and you alone, know how proud I am of my son—how I love him. Don't interrupt me, I beg. I objected to his marriage to you, because it was not suitable. I know your

history; I know now that my son's valet was your lover before he knew you. I know the man has always loved you, and that it is supposed to be a penance he is living out here; I also believe that such a proceeding is a farce. A man who loves a woman once is not to be entrusted with her or about her again—men are very much alike. I have heard other things about you, but I never believed that you were a party to this *liaison* until to-day, Nœmie, when I saw you and Pierre leave a disreputable house together."

Nœmie had been growing whiter and whiter as the words dropped like icicles from the elder woman's lips, and she slowly rose to her feet and looked around like a fawn stricken by a hawk—looked for some opening of escape. She nearly fell.

"Madame," she said, "do you mean to accuse me, your son's wife, of a *liaison* with his servant?"

"Can you explain your presence with him in that house?" said the elder lady.

"An explanation is not required, but my husband sent for me to meet him there; he also sent for Pierre, and we met there, both astonished to find the other"; and Nœmie's eyes blazed as she thought of the insult this woman was thrusting upon her.

"My son sent for you to meet him at a dis-

reputable house? You ask me to believe that?" cried the mother.

"I can show you his note," replied Nœmie, and she turned to the basket in which she had thrown it—but the note was gone. She hunted all over the room, looked in her pockets, then turned and said: "I cannot find it; but it was a note from him asking me to meet him at three o'clock."

"I thought as much," replied the mother.

"You mean you do not believe me?" cried Nœmie. "You believe this vile thing of me—me, your son's wife?"

"I mean that I know my son would kill you before he would invite you to meet him at such a place. You will have to find some better explanation, I assure you."

Nœmie's eyes looked the almost speechless horror she felt.

"Send for my husband," she said. "Send for him and ask him."

"Send for him; that is the very point," said his mother. "Send for him and tell him that his wife and his valet have met at — West Ninth Street and his own mother saw them come out. Why, girl, he would shoot the knave and turn you into the street; the family would be disgraced—the Duryea name dragged in the mud of a horrible scandal—my son become a murderer. His life would be ruined. I wish to save

him from this disgrace and I intend to save the Duryea name."

"You believe this hideous lie about me?" repeated Nœmie—"you believe it?"

"I believe what I see; and when I tell my son —if I do—I can assure you that he nor any man could not fail to accept the evidence of their eyes. I suppose Pierre has a similar story to tell."

"He said my husband sent for him."

"I supposed so; and who brought the message? Can't you see that you have outraged all decency?—disgraced my son?—and I tell you he must not know it. I do not wish him to become a murderer."

"I shall tell my husband every detail," said Nœmie. "I shall explain every move I have made. Madame," and Nœmie drew herself up, "it is you who have disgraced your son and your son's wife. I have never in the slightest way been false to my husband. I have never failed to trust him, and I have always loved him. I am, before God, innocent of this vile suggestion. I have given you the real explanation. You will leave my house at once. I have permitted you to insult me because you are my husband's mother. Go!" and Nœmie, aroused, a magnificent figure of outraged dignity and innocence, pointed to the door, and her husband's mother, amazed, speechless at the temerity of the girl, turned and faced her a moment, stag-

gered back as though struck by a blow—a Duryea to be ordered out of her son's house by his wife—and as she passed the door she turned and said:

"It is you who should go, before you further disgrace my son and his family."

The moment Mrs. Duryea disappeared, Nœmie fell upon her knees, overwhelmed with shame and despair, and gave way to a flood of tears, wept until she was exhausted. The charge was so brutal, so untrue, so sudden—a bolt out of clear skies—that she was absolutely crushed, utterly overwhelmed—a dove stricken by a hawk. Then she began to think; her mind assumed its normal function and she saw that she had doubtless been tricked by some enemy and that it would be practically impossible to clear herself of the suspicion of taint in her husband's mind. The note had disappeared; she would not discuss the matter with Pierre—she abhorred the idea. She was broken-hearted, and, dropping before the little crucifix, she poured out her woes in tears before it; and here Julie saw her—gloated over her through the curtains, and withdrew.

Nœmie rose from her prayers calmer and more self-possessed, yet the horror, the malignity of the wound ate into her heart like a worm in the bud. If her husband knew it he would be miserable for life; his mother had advised her to go. A wild desire for someone who loved her, to whom she could turn, swept over her like a flame,

and the face of Toussaint—rough, rugged and homely, her old peasant father—rose before her. He would believe her, he would be her solace and rest. If all the world turned against her, there was her dear father. Nœmie did not hesitate. She rang for Julie, wrote a note to a friend as a pretence to send the girl out, took off her dress and jewellery, and laid them away. Then she went to a drawer and took out the plain, homely, rough dress she had worn to Quebec with her lover and Toussaint and put it on, even to the shoes and stockings and the rough fur jacket that Duryea had often buttoned about her, and the little hat.

All these things she had treasured and loved, and had often taken them out and donned them to make her husband laugh. Now she put them on to wear, sobbing as though her heart would break. She took only the locket of her mother, which she hid in her bosom. Glancing around the room, she looked at each article expressive of the love of her husband, her eyes finally resting on his portrait, which she seized, kissed and wept over, then thrust it into her pocket. Surely she could take this—he had given it to her.

Her little gold and ivory desk was open, and, dropping into the chair, she penned a line, sealed the envelope, gave a glance about the little room, and, lifting the curtains, passed out into the hall and listened.

Not a sound broke the stillness; the servants

were in their apartments, so Nœmie descended into the hall, looked around the splendid rooms where she had so long been the centre of interest, opened the door and passed out into the night.

CHAPTER XVI

TOUSSAINT

TOUSSAINT lived the life of a gentleman at Quebec, as a man of some means, and was a prominent feature of the little club of calèche drivers and odd characters who lived in the older parts of the city; but as the summer came on, he pined for the woods and streams of the Saguenay country, and this year the fields, forests and rivers became so real and strong an attraction to him that he determined to go to the old home; and then, if the salmon fishing was good, he would send for his son-in-law, M. Duryea, and his daughter, and they would spend the summer in the open as in the old days.

So, without saying anything to anyone, Toussaint closed his comfortable apartments, reported for duty at the office of the Government, and took the boat down the river, in due time arriving at the old camp, finding everything as he had left it, even to the message on the door.

Toussaint threw off his city clothes with delight, and, presently attired in an old suit of

deerskin, soft and velvet-like to the touch, with moccasins made by Nœmie, he went into the forest to cut wood for camp, singing the same old song, the only one he knew, and the one he had sung for fifty years to the hills and rivers of the Laurentian Mountains. Toussaint sang all day, tended his traps, watched the rivers for salmon, and, the fish running well, he bethought himself of sending a letter.

He had decided one morning to go to Tadousac, where the fathers could write him a letter, when he heard the neigh of a horse, then the breaking of twigs on the mountain trail.

Someone was approaching. He went out to meet them and saw, coming down the trail, a horse bearing a priest with someone behind. When they came nearer, and he was straining his eyes to see who the strangers were, a slight figure jumped from the back of a pony and came flying at him like a bird—a sweet-faced figure with loving eyes, and tears—God in Heaven!—tears, tears of joy, tears of sorrow. Toussaint opened his arms, and Nœmie, his little girl, was at home, at rest on his warm, true heart. Thank God in all this big world for the great hearts of oak with barks rugged and grim. Thank God for all the true and great souls, never heard of in the marts of great cities, yet who live and shine in the firmament of God's world, shine in his eyes and in his love—hearts of oak that come into their reward unknown to men.

"Ma leetle gal!—ma leetle gal!" cried Toussaint, as he lifted Nœmie in his arms. Turning toward the house, he carried her as he would a child, looking down into her tear-stained face a grim bronze-faced benediction.

"You come home to yo' fadder—eh, Nœmie?—come home, eh?" and he patted her face and stroked her hair. "Yes, ma leetle gal she come home."

Home! Ah, the blessed meaning of this word that God has given to men—its purity, its symbolism of righteousness, of goodness, its wealth of love, its ring of gladness, that stretches around and around all this eternal world! What more blessed word for man is there than home—home sanctified in the birth of a child, synonymous with its last abiding place on earth or the region beyond the stars, where eternal hope pictures the last home of the soul of man?

Toussaint never questioned Nœmie; he felt her sorrow, he saw that she was clothed in the old attire he loved, and he stroked them, held her tight in his arms, rocking to and fro, saying again and again:

"Ma leetle gal come home to her ol' fadder"; and as she looked at him her arms tightened about his creased and bronzed neck.

"I was tired, daddy, so I came home—I came home," she whispered, and this was all she said.

Hearing voices, Toussaint carried her into her little room, which was just as she had left it,

laid her on the bed, and went out to greet the good father and sister who had brought Nœmie to him and home.

"God bless you," said Toussaint, "for bringing my little girl to me," now speaking in French.

"We met her on the boat," said Father Ignatius, a Jesuit of Tadousac; "and as Sister Mary was her old teacher at the convent, and we had plenty of time, we thought we would see her safely home and spend a few days with you. I understand that the salmon fishing is not bad."

"Not bad!" echoed Toussaint. "I have to watch the stream with a stick to keep them from jumping out on to the bank"; and Toussaint laughed. "Look at this"; and going to the lodge he lifted a cloth and displayed a fine thirty-pound salmon, gleaming like silver.

Sister Mary had gone in to join Nœmie, and Father Ignatius stroked the fine fish, measured it with his hands and fairly gloated over it.

"There's no rule in the church against fishing, is there?" asked Toussaint.

"Rule?" cried Father Ignatius; "there's rules *for* fishing. St. Zeno is the patron saint of the angler. You may see him with a rod in his hand. How far is it to the pool where you took this fish?"

"Just a step, father; this afternoon I'll take you down the fairest river the sun ever shone on."

"Ah, Toussaint, you are the man after my

heart," and the good father clapped him heartily on the back; "you love to fish."

Toussaint took the big salmon and proceeded to clean it, in view of the sudden acquisition of guests, and soon Nœmie, pale but radiantly beautiful, came out into the sunshine she loved, with Sister Mary, whose arm was about her, a friend whose faith passed all understanding, a woman who cared not to know the cause of troubles, who had no curiosity, no wish but to wipe away sorrows with a wealth of love, sympathy and cheerfulness.

* * * * * * *

The night Nœmie left home and took the evening boat bound for the north and Quebec, her husband was detained by a directors' meeting at the Washington Club, and did not reach home until late. His orders were for Pierre not to sit up for him, so when Duryea entered his room after eleven o'clock he found his clothes laid out. Then he noiselessly entered his wife's room to see if she was asleep.

He approached the bed softly, not to awaken her, and looked in between the curtains of the big, canopied four-poster; but, to his surprise, he found that she was not there and saw that the bed had not been used. Then he noticed the dress she had worn on the chair. She had gone over to his mother's to spend the night, or, possibly, was at the theatre with friends; and he was about to ring for her maid when he noticed

a letter on her desk, addressed to him in the fair round hand. He tore it open and read:

"My Dear, Dear Husband: I am going home. May God bless you and keep you.

"Nœmie."

Twice Duryea read this extraordinary letter. "I am going home"—he read it again—"I am going home," until the words seemed burnt into his brain. Duryea reached for the bell-rope to call her maid, then thought better of it, thought of the talk and possible scandal. As he stood there, Julie appeared.

"I beg pardon. I thought I would see if madame needed anything. She did not call as usual."

"Your mistress has been called home," said Duryea. "I had a message that her father was very ill this afternoon, and I sent her off on the night boat. She had to go very suddenly. You can pack up her clothes and I will take them when I go to-morrow."

Duryea said this with perfect coolness, looking at the girl, yet labouring under the most intense emotion. Julie, unable to endure the terrible expression in his face and eyes, turned away, trembling with fear, to do his bidding, while Duryea passed out.

Julie heard him close the front door, and, turning, eyed herself in the tall mirror, and said:

"What a wonderful man! What a liar he is! I did not know he could do it. Ah, those are the men. It takes some great emotion to arouse them, and then they are magnificent; and now we will see how much of a liar Pierre is. Ah, he has not the spirit—he will tell the truth. The cringing hound has lost his mistress."

Duryea almost ran to his mother's house, roused the servants and was soon at his mother's room, knocking at her door. In a few moments she came out.

"Mother," he cried, "Nœmie has left me—she has gone. In God's name, what have I done? No man could love his wife more—read this"; and he handed the little note to his mother, and buried his face in his hands.

She read it and tried to think what to say, but she was too late. He saw her lack of astonishment; then she faltered and said the wrong thing: "Did she go alone?"

"Alone!" exclaimed her son—"alone! She went without me."

"Did her maid go?"

"No."

"Or your valet?"

Duryea sprang to his feet, livid with rage.

"Mother," he cried, "I can stand much from you, but you have gone beyond the limit. Explain yourself. I demand it!"

"I will," she said, trembling; and then she told him the whole awful story, while he stood,

turned to stone, a grey deathly colour stealing over his face that made him look like an old man.

"Have courage, my son," said his mother. "I am the only witness; it will never be known."

"Never be known!" echoed Duryea, his voice sounding like a tone coming from far away—"never be known! Do you think for one moment that I believe this of my wife—of Nœmie? My God! my God!—and you, my mother, confronted her with it?"

"I told her that she must not tell you."

"You told her that? You took from her the only opportunity she had of clearing herself—you, my mother!" and Duryea pointed his finger at the proud, trembling woman. "My God! I cannot believe it!"

"I did it to save your name, John."

"Well, you have ruined my life," said Duryea, looking at her in a way that killed her very heart-beats.

"She said you sent her a note to meet her at this place, and when I asked to see the note she could not find it."

"What did Pierre say?" asked her son, a terrible menacing light in his eyes.

"He said you sent him a message to be at this house at the same hour."

"And who told you?" asked Duryea.

His mother hesitated.

"Who told you?" repeated her son, white as

a dead man. "Who told you to go to the meeting place so that you could see their shame?"

"Her maid."

"Julie?" asked Duryea.

"Julie," repeated his mother.

"Ah, I see it all," cried Duryea. "My wife has in some way been surrounded with spies and hounds who have trailed her to her death, and you, my mother, you who should have protected her, have looked on! I never can forgive you—never! And I want to tell you now in the last words that I shall ever say to you in this world, that I do not believe Nœmie ever had an evil thought in all her life—that I do not believe there is a scintilla of truth in what you say."

The tall, proud woman stood as though nailed to the cross of his fearful denunciation, and, as he told her he would never speak to her—never see her again—she raised her arms and tried to speak.

"John, my son—John!" and she fell fainting to the floor, as Duryea's footsteps echoed through the hall.

Duryea reached home, and going to Pierre's room, called him out, a terrible figure of a man, his eyes gleaming like coals, his face distorted.

"Sit down," said Duryea; "tell me what happened, and make no mistake or I may strangle you"; and he moved up to the trembling valet and bent forward ready to kill the man—not because he thought him guilty, but because in a

remote way he had been the cause of his wife's unhappiness. That was quite enough to demand expiation in a life, thought Duryea, as wild fancies, rage and despair swept over his troubled, excited brain.

"About two o'clock, m'sieu'," began Pierre, "a message came by a man I had never seen to meet you at number — West Ninth Street, and bring the book, 'Art,' by Campear. I went, and while waiting in the parlour, a poor place, madame walked in. She was very much surprised at seeing me, but she said that she had a note from you asking her to meet you there."

"Was there anyone in the room?"

"Yes; an old lady, a visitor also. We waited perhaps half an hour, then I hunted up the proprietor, who said that she did not know you, so I suggested to madame that a mistake had been made. And when we reached the street I made an excuse to go the opposite way that I might not compromise madame, as I suspected a plot of some kind; but I followed madame at a distance without her knowing it, to see that she came to no harm, and saw her enter the house. I then went to your studio, but not finding you, came home, and, as you did not return, retired. That is all I know, m'sieu', except that a policeman told me that number — was a place of bad repute."

Duryea had watched Pierre as he told the story, and on its conclusion said:

"I believe you, Pierre. If I thought you had led my wife to such a place, if I had the slightest suspicion that you had attempted to compromise her, I would kill you with my hands right here; but someone has tricked you both. What enemies have you?"

"None, m'sieu'."

"This Julie," said Duryea, in French—"are you friends?"

"Yes, m'sieu'," said Pierre, hesitatingly. "We are friends, but not intimate friends. I do not like to say anything against her, but she once, in a rage, accused me of loving madame—I think she heard in some way of my former life—m'sieu' will understand. I do not wish to appear conceited, but I think Julie would marry me if I asked her, m'sieu'."

"You have never devoted yourself to her?"

"Never. I have devoted myself to the church, but I did not tell her that."

"I see," said Duryea; "a jealous woman. Remain here, Pierre, and do not lose sight of her. I have told her that my wife has gone to Quebec to see her father, who is ill, and I follow tonight; tell that story if anyone asks for us."

"Yes, m'sieu'."

Duryea went again into his wife's room, and, led by some intuition, opened the drawer in which Nœmie kept her reminders of old days, and saw that they were gone. Nœmie had cast off her fashionable attire, put on the clothes

Toussaint had given her and gone to him. Duryea broke down completely at this, and wept like a child. And what more terrible thing is there than tears from a man, tears of repentance, tears of love perhaps lost, tears of agony and fear, tears telling of the complete breaking down of the framework of courage and mastery upon which the true man is built?

CHAPTER XVII

THE COUNSEL FOR DEFENDANT

JOHN DURYEA did not start for Quebec that night on the trail of Nœmie, as he intended. Man proposes but God disposes, an epigram more often true in the fact than the opposite. On the way to the boat he was taken ill, carried back to his home, and for three weeks he was delirious with fever and on the borderland, constantly raving and calling for Nœmie, who, by some mischance, due to the isolated location of the camp, did not receive letters sent by Pierre, acquainting her of the facts.

During the illness of her son, Mrs. Duryea, demoralised and utterly broken by his attitude, found it necessary to have some confidant, and one day, in a burst of contriteness, she told her cousin, Miss Vandevoort, the whole miserable story, much to that stern, relentless, yet amiable lady's astonishment and indignation.

"Jane Duryea!" said her cousin, pinning her with her bright eyes. "I always suspected you were a fool; now I am sure of it."

"Oh, Felicia!" cried the mother. "This is no time for abuse or recrimination. John may die. He has cast me off—his mother."

"Nonsense," said Miss Vandevoort; "he won't die. He will not cast you off. Be a little optimistic, and, if you get the optimistic idea into your head, everything will be right. If you had been an optimist, you would have spurned the first thought that your son's wife was guilty. Oh, Jane," cried Miss Vandevoort, planting her hands on her knees, and looking at her victim severely, "how could you be such an—well, I'll say it if I die for it—such an ass?"

Mrs. Duryea flushed a little at this. Such terms were doubtless not known in old New York; but she took it—she deserved it—and moaned. "What shall I do, Felicia?"

"Take your medicine," said her cousin. "Acknowledge that you made a fool of yourself; write to your son's wife, and beg her to forgive you, or go and get her—that would be the manly thing to do."

"But how do you explain what I saw? I was not dreaming. I saw them," said the mother, staring at the other through her tears, unable to discredit her senses.

"Of course you saw them," snapped back Miss Vandevoort, "and you can explain it by considering every talebearer a liar, every gossip-carrier a prevaricator and criminal. Someone had an object in ruining your daughter-in-law,

and they went about it in a clever, and, at the same time, in a very absurd way; but the idea was to tar both your daughter and your son's valet with the same stick. Who put you on this nauseous trail, Jane?"

"Julie, Nœmie's maid," replied Mrs. Duryea, covering her eyes to shut out the awful crumbling of the blocks of suspicion, which were rattling down upon her head and heart.

"Julie! Just like a cheap French novel," snapped Miss Vandevoort. "It is always the maid in love with the master, and jealous of the wife."

"I don't know whom she was in love with. She made no charges. She told me that she knew that Pierre had been in love with Nœmie, and that was enough to startle me."

"It would startle *you,* possibly," said Miss Vandevoort, with a sniff, "but not me. What would startle me would be to hear that there was a man on earth with anything but soft soap in his veins who wouldn't be in love with that beautiful creature. If I was a man I'd carry her off in a balloon or something, if I found she had a husband who neglected her, as I suspect John did. She's too good for him, or any of these men—poor lamb!" and the spinster paced up and down the room, a seething human volcano of disgust and impatience.

"I see it all, Jane," she said, stopping in front of the stricken woman. "I used to read French novels in Paris. It's the old case of the jealous

maid, who thinks the charming valet is in love with the mistress; so she concocts this cock-and-bull story and carries it out, skilfully, I must say. She probably sent the messenger and wrote the note to Nœmie herself. Where is she? I'll worm it out of her in five seconds. The—— But the note cannot be found," added Miss Vandevoort. "The girl stole it and destroyed it to further complicate the situation—the regular formula. Oh, wait until I see her!" and Miss Vandevoort shook a much ringed, and withal delicate, clenched hand at the door.

"Now, Jane," she continued, "I don't wish to utterly crush you, but I do want to give you the lesson of your life—to be faithful first to your own; never listen to the voice of scandal; stand by your friends and family unto the end, and resent the gossip, male or female, as an underbred liar and social menace, as he or she always is. Half the trouble on earth comes from harmless gossip and the failure of people to attend strictly to their own affairs. Believe in the good of the world and set an example to the rest, and all the bad will be routed, and"—Miss Vandevoort forced a grim smile into action—"don't believe that the descendants of the friends of Mrs. Washington are the only eligibles on earth. You have discovered that the daughter of a Canadian peasant is one of its shining lights. God made all of us, Jane. Perhaps we are not all of a class, but we should all have the same chance,

and we have no right to look down upon the handiwork of God. I find some of the best-hearted people, some of the most honest men and women, some of the most beautiful Christian lives, among those we call the middle and even the lower classes—the common people. God certainly must have liked them or he never would have made so many of them. This isn't an original sentiment, but it's good, and good things are true, as a rule. Jane, don't believe all you hear, and, if you must listen to scandal (I suppose we can't kill off all the scandalmongers this year), always remember that there are two sides to every story. Women are not always the weak and fragile sisters they are supposed to be in novels, nor are men always the deep-dyed villains depicted in the play. It is well to remember that our sex has had a hand in the undoing of about every great man who ever lived, and I don't know but what they deserved it; but the moral is, don't give snap judgment; don't listen to gossip—the gossip always lives in a glass house himself, has done something, has relatives who were hung, or that she or he is ashamed of. You can put that down as one of the great maxims of this queer life. As I say, there are always two sides to every story, good, bad or indifferent, and no one has a right to talk on subjects on which they are not fully informed. Ah, I wish I was a man," said Miss Vandevoort, bracing back and squaring her somewhat angular shoul-

ders. "I know one or two of our dear friends I would have out in the Harlem fields before night.

"If there is any possible doubt in your mind as to this explanation," continued the relentless cousin, "I can happily sweep it away. This place, number — West Ninth Street, is a disreputable resort. How your wife's maid knew it I don't propose to say, but she did. I belong to a society for the alleviation of fallen women. Personally, I have no objection to the Foreign Missionary Society, but to save my life, Jane, I can't see how a missionary can go to Timbuctoo or to China to convert the heathen when we have so many here. In a word, *we* are working on the American heathen, and when we get them converted we're going to try the others. It is one of our customs to send out committees, bands of workers, to visit these resorts. It is a most distressing and disagreeable work, and on the afternoon this trick was played upon a pure woman, when she was criminally induced to cross the threshold of that den of infamy, one of our workers, Mary Emma Sibley by name, sat in the parlour of the house waiting for one of the occupants, who had sent for her. She saw Pierre come in, book in hand; he asked her in English if Mr. Duryea had been there, and she supposed him a *habitué* of the place. She saw Nœmie enter the room, noticed the amazement on both their faces, listened to them discuss

in French, which she speaks fluently, the non-appearance of John, heard them both state that they had been asked to meet your son there at three o'clock. Not for a second did Nœmie leave the room, and when they left, Mary Emma Sibley followed Nœmie out and saw her go down the steps, saw the valet, always respectful, turn and go the other way. It is," continued Miss Vandevoort, sitting as straight as a ramrod, and growing straighter and straighter, if possible, as she continued to outline her case (Miss Vandevoort should have practised law), "it is, I say (gentlemen of the jury), our custom to meet once a month, when our committee reports everything they have seen, and what was more natural than for Mary Emma Sibley to tell the story of a beautiful French girl she saw waiting in one of these places? What is more natural than for me to prick up my ears at the name Duryea? I interviewed Mary Emma, I took a picture of Nœmie to her, I confronted her with Pierre, and so learned the whole miserable parcel of lies and blackmail which led up to this disaster and the dissolving of a presumably happy family. Though," said Miss Vandevoort, "I am quite satisfied with the single state as *I* find it."

"What can I do, Felicia?" wailed Mrs. Duryea, completely crushed. "I see it all! I see it all!"

"Do?" said Miss Vandevoort. "Stop crying for one thing. Be a ma—a woman. Write to

Nœmie and beg her pardon. Explain the whole thing from top to bottom. Nurse your boy back to life again, and—be optimistic."

Mrs. Duryea threw her arms about her kinswoman's neck, and it must be confessed that a single tear might have been seen coursing down Miss Vandevoort's cheek—it paused a second, then was dashed into oblivion by a swift blow from that lady's hand. She despised weakness in any form.

"Jane, the first moment that John can stand a talk from me, let me know. I am the one to talk to him."

"God bless you, Felicia!" said Mrs. Duryea.

"Nonsense!" replied the lady, adjusting her cloak; "that is, I want to be blessed, but I've only done my civic duty in the matter. Good-bye, Jane. You are a lucky woman. You have the opportunity to right a great wrong."

John Duryea recovered slowly; but one day he saw Miss Vandevoort and heard the true story and was shown a letter which read:

"Charlevoix, Quebec.

"M. JOHN DURYEA, New York, N. Y.

"Dear Sir: My little girl Nœmie she is at home with me and well.

"Your servant,

"TOUSSAINT RÉVAL."

"Thank God!" said Duryea, weakly.

"Another thing, John," said his cousin. "Your mother——" Duryea turned his head away.

"John," snapped Miss Vandevoort, "have I, or have I not conducted this case, or rather this affair, successfully so far?"

"You certainly have," replied Duryea, smiling feebly at the attorney for the defendant.

"Then," said Miss Vandevoort, "if I am to be retained as counsel, so to speak, you must do as I say—forgive your mother. She's your mother, John—a poor broken woman, and, the Lord knows, she's sorry. She made an awful mistake, but don't kill her. She's sorry. She's given up everything she liked; she's even ready to give up Mrs. Washington's calling-list descendants. She's out here, John—she wants to see you."

Miss Vandevoort rose and beckoned to someone at the door. A slender, sad-faced woman, not the Mrs. Duryea of old, took her place. She sank down by the bed, her son's arms were raised to her, her own clasped his neck, her head was pillowed on his breast, and Miss Vandevoort stalked out and down the hall, blowing a blast upon her nose, so violent, so emphatic, so revolutionary, that a canary bird, hung by the window, stopped singing and dashed from side to side in abject fear and terror.

CHAPTER XVIII

FATHER IGNATIUS LANDS A SALMON

Duryea and Pierre were floating down the St. Lawrence, going over old familiar ground. They reached Quebec, and soon made their way to Toussaint's home to see if there was word from him. They found it locked, but the pension keeper said that she had several letters for him. One Duryea saw was from his mother to Nœmie, another from Miss Vandevoort, so Nœmie had not heard of his illness. They took a small vessel down the river, passing the purple shadows, the Lorelei, which had first lured him on to Nœmie.

As they entered the little bay, a fine sea-going yacht was getting under way. She was long, low, painted black, her masts tall, slender and rakish, and a crowd of men were hustling about her deck.

She was some distance off, but Duryea could hear the clank, clank of her capstan and the cries of the men—"oeho, oho, aeho, aho"—as they bent to the halyards. Then the jib went rattling

up and she fell away and the wind filled the white billowing sails as she headed for the wide open sea, down the St. Lawrence.

They went ashore at the same little hamlet, secured two horses, and began the long ride up the river to the lodge, every tree and rock along which brought sorrow and regret to Duryea. He saw how he had possibly neglected Nœmie—how her heart had been broken. There was no rest the first night. They did not camp, only dismounted to ease the horses, stopping for a few moments now and then for the animals to feed, eating, themselves, on the trail. The next day Pierre's horse gave out, and Duryea told him to camp and come along when he could, while he hurried on. His impatience was becoming unbearable—he could not wait to see Nœmie, to clasp her in his arms, to ask her forgiveness for his neglect, to tell her that all was known and understood. Walking, dragging his weary and reluctant horse, Duryea suddenly heard a shout, and, stopping, ran to the willows that hid the stream and looking through saw a large and plethoric priest, a Jesuit in his habit and large flat hat, with his long coat rolled up to expose a powerful pair of legs—legs, as some distinguished paleontologist has said of those of the mastodon, better adapted for support than for locomotion. The good father had hooked a large salmon in a beautiful pool, and the fish, making a splendid run, had doubt-

less stolen more line than was expected, and was taking the father into deep water.

"Toussaint, Toussaint—run!" he cried, and then slid from the rock up to his arm-pits; but he held his rod high in air, never losing sight of the fact that he had a fish, and desperately tried to lead it inshore. In the meantime, Toussaint, for it was he, the same old Toussaint, came around the bend, bearing a sack of fish and a long gaff, and on seeing the big broad hat of the father on the water and nothing else in sight, broke into laughter.

"Merci! your reverence, where are you?" he shouted.

"Under the hat, stupid!" shrieked the father, chuckling with laughter at the figure he knew he cut, blowing water from his mouth like a mill-wheel, giving the fish the butt and puffing like a white whale.

"Keep away from the pool!" shouted Toussaint.

"But how?" sputtered the angler; "he is taking me down."

"Hold him! Hold him till I come!" shouted Toussaint, and, dropping his bag, he ran down the shore, crossing the stream in the shallows to a point opposite to where Duryea was standing.

"This way, reverence—this way."

"But I cannot swim," said the father.

"Back upstream to the shallows, your reverence."

"But he won't come—he sulks. Ah, Toussaint, if I lose this fish! He is the largest salmon ever hooked. I feel it. If I lose him who would do the swearing?"

"I will, your reverence," shouted Toussaint. "It's always the biggest fish that goes off."

By a mighty effort the good father regained shallow water, started his fish and began to reel; then the salmon went up into the air, a gleaming mass of molten silver.

"Did you see that, Toussaint?" gasped the angler. "Ah—ah—look!" and up into the air went the splendid fish, which went dashing, pirouetting across the pool on his tail, a dancing, whirling, finned dervish of the sea.

The angler backed slowly in, his big broad-brimmed hat flapping; reeling well, holding the long rod up to give the proper bend, slacking, reeling, giving the butt, breathing hard, almost slipping down; now prancing into deep water, now backing out; once sitting down with an elephantine splash, which sent ripples and tidal waves from shore to shore. The good father never lost his temper or his hold, but reeled on and on, to the exclamations of Toussaint, who had never seen so strange an angler, like some huge hippopotamus, yet never a better one.

In due time the father reached the shallows and slowly reeled the big fish in. Toussaint reached out, and, at exactly the proper moment, gaffed the salmon, and held it up to the amazing

eyes of the father; then he killed it humanely, and laid it at his feet.

"It's a beauty! Did you ever see such a splendid fish, Toussaint?"

"I never did," Toussaint replied, crossing himself at the lie; "or one better played" (another cross).

"I'll have to fast a week," said the angler. "I had too much pleasure in that murderous act. It's penance I'll need."

"You can take penance by not eating the fish, your reverence," said Toussaint, stooping down to hide his face.

Father Ignatius looked at him and laughed, and weighed the salmon on his finger, guessing Yankee fashion at its weight, and said: "Toussaint, the church lost a good father superior when you became a fisherman. I'll take my penance, but *after* we eat that salmon."

Toussaint picked up the fish, placed it in the sack, the father donned his shoes at the riverside, and the two started up the bank, coming out on to the trail face to face with Duryea.

"Toussaint!" he cried.

"M'sieu' Duryea!" said Toussaint, dropping his sack in amazement.

"Nœmie—she is well?" asked Duryea, holding out his hand.

"Yes, m'sieu'," said the old gaffer, quietly. "Ma leetle gal she well. She gone to Quebec with Sister Marie."

CHAPTER XIX

THE MEETING

THE winter season of the Riviera had begun. The villas and palaces of the old Neapolitan princes and noblemen who were impoverished, were filled with English and Americans, as well as the hotels, and the roads leading out of Naples by day were filled with carriages, and the theatres by throngs at night, and at all times the great cathedral held bended supplicants for aid and benediction. All the world of fashion of Europe seemed to be here, an iridescent life, like a bubble, floating with the wind, buoyant and uncertain.

Among the guests at the Scala was John Duryea. All that Toussaint could tell him was that Nœmie had gone to the convent at Quebec with the much loved Sister Mary, who had been a mother to her at Tadousac when she was a child, her teacher later.

At the convent, Duryea was told that Sister Mary had gone abroad for health and to inspect the convent schools of Europe in the interest of

the church, and she had taken her old pupil with her. They would probably stop in Normandy, then proceed to Paris, and so on by slow degrees to Rome, and the sister superior could not definitely locate them until she heard from Sister Mary.

So Duryea sailed for England, and became a wanderer, hoping against hope that he would find Nœmie.

He had explained the entire matter to Father Ignatius and to Toussaint, and had the assurance of their aid. Toussaint was to write to him in care of the American Ministers to France, Spain and Italy, the moment he heard from her, understanding the situation and believing it best that she should return to her husband; yet, so far as Duryea was concerned, Nœmie had dropped out of existence.

He had wandered over half of Europe, visited all the convents, churches, cathedrals and schools, sometimes hearing of them, again losing them like *ignes fatui.* Once when he entered the great cathedral of St. Peter's in Rome, he accosted a nun leading a line of orphans, and asked her in Italian whether Sister Mary had yet visited her school, and learned that she had been there with a lady friend but the week before.

Duryea walked the streets, looking into every face, until the police came to know him, and more than once he was called upon for his pass-

ports and for identification. One night he dropped into a large theatre where he had been told by the English consul that an English lady, Madame Paddington, who had a rare voice, was to sing for charity.

"Rare, indeed," said M. Damè, a young attaché of the French legation. "I happen to know that Madame Paddington has been offered anything if she will sing in opera. People are raving over her, and she is absolutely enchanting."

"Ah, you are a lucky dog, Damè. You know all the beautiful women," said a young army officer.

Damè said nothing. He did not know Madame Paddington, but had no objection to seem to be an intimate friend.

The men, Duryea and the rest, had the box of Prince Tallyrand, who had tendered it with his compliments; and as the curtain went up, Duryea was forced into the front seat. A pianist appeared and played an aria, then the audience began to cheer, and, as a fair and beautiful woman came out, they rose, shouted and cheered her to the echo.

Duryea was looking at the audience, but, as he turned, his eyes fell upon his wife—Nœmie. Nœmie as beautiful, as radiant as ever. His heart almost stopped beating and he clutched the edge of the box, as his head swam, and

fiery comets rained, rolled and plunged before his eyes.

Then the wonderful voice came stealing from her lips, a medley of beautiful sounds, which blended with others and held the vast audience entranced. She sang a simple Italian song, and, as the audience would not release her, she sang again and again. As she came out a third time to bow her thanks, Duryea was standing staring at her face, transfixed, when, by some subtle attraction, she turned her face and her eyes rested on him.

She stared for a moment, then the delicate pink of her cheeks paled and she turned, staggered, and almost fell into the arms of Signor Pevanichie, the accompanist, and the curtain fell amid some confusion.

Immediately the manager appeared before the curtain and said:

"Madame Paddington has been seized with a slight vertigo and, much to her regret, will not be able to proceed."

The audience cheered again and again, but Duryea was not there. He had rushed from the box, into the lobby, hatless, in his excitement, and was making for the stage door when an officer stopped him. A hatless gentleman running like a madman out of a theatre was a suspicious object in Naples at that time.

"Release me!" cried Duryea, pushing the man aside; but at that another officer ran to the as-

sistance of his comrade and they forced Duryea into the private office and demanded who he was.

"I saw an old friend, Madame Paddington, and desired to see her before she left."

"Oh, is that it?" said the officer. "Every night there are several dozen madmen who wish to see madame. If that is all, Signor Duryea is released," and the men laughed; and Duryea, infuriated, strode out and made his way to the stage door, to find a crowd gathering for the same purpose. He crowded to the entrance and slipped a large coin into the doorkeeper's hand, saying: "I wish to see Madame Paddington."

"I am sorry, signor," replied the man, "but to avoid the crowd, signora has passed out behind the stage, through the office, and must now be on her way home."

"The address is?" and Duryea slipped another coin into the open fingers.

"Pardon a moment, signor," and the man darted into his den of an office, returning with a card, which he cleverly passed to Duryea, as he pretended to shake hands with him.

Duryea ran to the sidewalk and called a carriage.

"Where to, excellency?" asked the man.

"Take me to——" and he held the card up to the side lamp. "Madame Paddington, The Nœmie," was the address.

Duryea was staggered and the man again

asked the question, suspecting that the gentleman was intoxicated.

"Is there a hotel or pension, or anything of the kind, called the 'Nœmie,' in Naples?" he asked in Italian.

"Never heard of it, excellency."

"Take me to the Scala," and he got in and was driven to the hotel, but no one had heard of the name. He returned to the office, but it was closed.

The next day Duryea visited the theatre again and waited until noon to find the manager, who had dined late, after the fashion of managers, and, having arisen late, was in ill humour.

"Where is the 'Nœmie'?" he said in reply. "I do not know. Madame threw up her engagement, suddenly, last night. She was to sing a week, and all for charity for the benefit of the orphans of Naples, but it has been postponed. I suppose she is on the 'Nœmie,' but really I am not madame's keeper."

"What is the 'Nœmie'?" asked Duryea.

"Why, madame's yacht, signor," staring at the man and wondering at his appearance.

When Duryea reached the bay, he learned that two big yachts, which had been lying there for two weeks, had sailed some time in the night.

CHAPTER XX

AN INSISTENT GENTLEMAN

WHEN Schuyler Morley crept through the streets of Key West, on the night of his escape, after the marooning experience the wreckers had subjected him to, he kept very much to himself, feeling that he was in the enemies' country. At that time Key West was made up of wreckers, salvage brokers, and outfitters, with a sprinkling of people with allied interests from up the coast, and many fine old Southern families.

The key was a sort of tropical paradise; the streets were not given over to trade to any great extent, and were covered with a growth of Bermuda grass, and lined with places in which grew groves of banana, cocoanut, mango, guava, and countless other tropical plants.

The night was clear and beautiful, the stars stood out in the heavens like steel faucets set in deep turquoise blue. Away to the south, the southern cross hung in the sky, near the horizon, and the perfume from countless banks of flowers and night-blooming cereus, filled the air,

while a musical rustle like the fall of gentle rain, the clanging of the leaves of the cocoa high in the air, was always heard where the graceful plume-like leaves stood out against the sky.

The day before, a slaver had been brought in, and the big barracoons on the south beach were filled with a crowd of men, women and children. The negro population of the town and the Conchs had been down to see them, and now came trooping back.

The air was cloyed and heavy with floral incense. Big humming-bird-like moths darted about the night-flowers, and, as the darkness deepened, lights began to appear, dashing this way and that, plunging down like mimic meteors, circling about one another, gems of the night, mimic constellations, living lights, the phosphorescent beetles of the tropics. Children were chasing them and fastening them in their hair, and some appeared to have crowns of phosphorescent light; others held them in cages or bunched them together, forming a brilliant single glare, like that from a huge diamond of the first water.

Negroes were lying everywhere in the street, in the soft grass, singing, playing on banjos, guitars, and the triangle, and from over a lime hedge, from a little negro church, came the wailing cries of lost souls seeking redemption in time, harmony and perfect syncopation.

Morley joined groups of the singers in the

gloom, listening to the wild music as it floated away on the soft air, and wondered why he could not live this life always.

He had learned that a steamer sailed at midnight, or as soon as she could; and stealing aboard, he secured a stateroom from the purser, and the next morning was well up the Florida Straits, reaching New York in six days—remarkable time for the period.

Morley was somewhat doubtful as to his reception. He knew that Nœmie would not mention his attempted escapade to anyone. At least he assumed that, and the fact that Colonel Grenfel so adroitly turned the knockdown into an accident was suggestive that he desired to keep the incident a secret. Hence it was with some trepidation that he visited his club, and was relieved to find that he received a warm welcome from his friends, whom he entertained with accounts of the wreck and his escape, without mentioning his somewhat peculiar experiences; these he proposed to reserve for the Government through the Secretary of War.

Among the letters in his box at the club, he found one from Julie, asking him to communicate with her at an early day. Complying, he found that she was now in the chorus of a spectacular extravaganza, and after watching her from a box, he joined her at supper, and learned that Nœmie had left Duryea and gone home, and that Duryea had followed her; but beyond here

she was at sea, as she had been courteously informed that the house was to be closed, and her services would not be longer required.

Pierre had joined the church, she said, and was a martyr. Unrequited love had doubtless driven him to it, and she had lost interest in him when she found that apparently no one else wanted him.

It was not long before a daily paper contained a notice that John Duryea had gone abroad for an indefinite period. Morley assumed that he had followed his wife, or taken her with him; and to determine this, he undertook a fishing trip to the Charlevoix on tips given by Julie. He found Toussaint and engaged him as a guide for a week's salmon fishing, at the end of which he had landed four salmon and all the news about Nœmie Toussaint (having passed himself off as a friend of the family) had at his command. Nœmie was in Italy with an old convent teacher.

Morley was the owner of one of the largest sea-going yachts afloat, a large brig-rigged schooner which he sometimes used to visit the banana coast of South America, where he had large interests. So, being a very persistent gentleman, in his love affairs particularly, he sent instructions to his captain to ship a large crew for an ocean trip, outfit, and meet him at Gibraltar. This was consummated, and from there he sailed up the Mediterranean, finally, on the 15th of July, reaching Naples.

As the *Onorah* sailed slowly in to her anchorage, Morley noticed a schooner yacht some ten tons smaller than his own, trim, natty as a privateer. As he went ashore, he asked who she was, but the man did not know; he thought she hailed from the Isle of Man, and was a "Johnny Bull."

It so happened (and the Society for Psychical Research has demonstrated that coincidence is equally as common as fact) that Morley went ashore the night of the meeting of Duryea and Nœmie at the theatre.

He called at the club, visited several cafés, made certain inquiries about convent schools on the plea that he had a niece for whom he was soon to select a school, and about ten o'clock strolled down to the pier. He was bartering with a man to take him off to his yacht, when a carriage drove rapidly up to the dock. Morley was waiting for a Neapolitan to bring up his boat and was sitting smoking in the shadow of a pier, practically in complete darkness.

A gentleman and lady alighted; the man stepped to the head of the stairs, whistled, and someone in a boat around the edge of the dock immediately replied: "Aye, aye, sir."

The man turned, and, as the light of the lantern on the pier flashed in his face, Morley saw that it was Colonel Grenfel. At the same moment he recognised Nœmie.

The suddenness of the encounter took him unawares, and the man, usually cool, untouched

or influenced by anything, trembled to find himself so near the woman he loved. For a single second the impulse was strong to rush at Grenfel, who he now firmly believed to be Nœmie's lover, and throw him over and take the chance of his drowning and his own escape in the dark. But a second thought showed him the futility of this. With Grenfel's men at hand, it was impossible; and so this man, physically brave, but morally a degenerate and coward, was forced to sit, cowed in a corner, and see the woman he would have stolen, kidnapped—anything to get her—almost brush by him, enter the cutter to be carried off before his eyes.

But there were other days; and he jumped into a Neapolitan's boat as it came along, and was rowed out into the beautiful bay, brooding feverishly on methods of revenge on Grenfel, and how he could obtain possession of Nœmie, as, while beaten and discredited, Morley was in no sense discouraged, and the fact that Nœmie was with Grenfel but aroused all the latent ugliness of his nature. He was a typical dog in the manger—if he could not possess the object of his desires, no one else should if he could help it.

The man soon reached the yacht, Morley climbed aboard, and threw himself into a deck-chair, and fastened his eyes on the lights of the other yacht, not two hundred yards away.

The wind was fresh and warm, blowing from

her, and as clear as a bell over the water came the order: "All hands on deck! Make sail!" Lights began to flash, he heard the clanking of the awning rods, then the men began to man the halyards, and the clank, clank of the capstan came on the wind. There was no mistake about it, Grenfel was going to sail.

Morley sprang to the forecastle and, swinging himself down, sang out:

"All hands on deck! Make sail!"

The men rolled out of their berths, some growling, some swearing.

"Lads, get under way without making any noise, and your wages are doubled for the next three months, and extra grog."

The men wanted to cheer, but they suppressed their enthusiasm, and crawled on deck, barefooted, some half naked, and went at it so quietly and rapidly that ten minutes after the Grenfel yacht ran up her jib and fell away before the east night wind, the *Onorah* followed suit.

The captain was on deck soon after her owner gave the order, and took command.

"Captain Garvie," said Morley, "I don't want to lose sight of that yacht. I want to follow her, but I don't want her to suspect it if possible; and if we come near her, I won't show up. Remember, you are owner, and cruising for pleasure."

"I see, sir," replied Captain Garvie, a good sailor with love of adventure. "I know we can

outsail her, at least I think so, so we can jog along, and just keep her in sight. She's evidently outward bound. They say she hails from the Isle of Man."

"Are we provisioned for a long trip?" asked Morley.

"Yes, sir. We can go around the world, so far as supplies are concerned."

The wind was freshening. The big yacht could be seen, shaking out her mainsail, and the *Onorah*, a new name which Morley had given his yacht within two months for reasons of his own, hauled a little on the wind, to get the weather gauge, and when three miles to windward, far enough away to avoid suspicion, she took the course of Grenfel's yacht.

"You can keep her in sight, Garvie?"

"She'll never get away from me if you say so, sir."

"Well, I say it," laughed Morley. "Have a cigar."

CHAPTER XXI

A STERN CHASE

Long into the night, Morley sat on the quarter-deck smoking and fiercely chewing on cigars, while watching the distant lights of Grenfel's yacht, raging and fuming until he was almost beside himself. One moment he made up his mind to run alongside and make an open fight for the game; then he would calm down and decide to use tact and diplomacy, in which he considered himself a master, pacing up and down the deck, an evil genius of the material spectacular criminals, pirates and Claude Duvals are made of, and ready with courage and cleverness to attempt or accomplish anything, no matter how unreasonable or absurd.

Had Morley been a poor man, placed in the right position, he would have made an excellent pupil of Machiavelli. Intrigue and its various ramifications were a delight to him, and the more devious or involved the route the more entrancing the pursuit became.

Having a mind framed on lines best fitted for

intrigue, it was only natural that he should believe that everyone else contemplated human existence from the same standpoint, and that life was a battle, a warfare, in which not the fittest, but the cleverest survived.

Awake and dreaming, he brought all the subtle activities of his mind to bear upon Grenfel, and the part he played in the peculiar drama of life, in which Morley conceived himself to be the central figure. Life to him was a stage in reality, and he and his victims, friends and enemies were the puppets, and it was comedy, tragedy or comic opera, as the case might be, but generally a combination of all three. Hence the present chase, with its possibilities of adventure and its actualities of romance, appealed to him, stimulated his brain, fortified his courage, which had never been questioned in many a bout and duel.

Never before had Morley been beaten so utterly, and so incapable of solving a riddle, as that which seemed to him to involve Colonel Grenfel, a gentleman of leisure, and Colonel Grenfel's double, a common wrecker, the leader of a band of Conchs and beachcombers, little better than pirates.

The great attraction which Nœmie had for him, aside from her beauty—indeed, the greatest—had been her innocence and child-like purity of mind, and of this he had been more than sure, as, when he contrasted her with scores of women he had known in all ranks of life, from the in-

génue to the prima donna, he was forced to acknowledge that she stood alone. She had none of the moral frivolities of the day that he could discover. She was, so far as he could see, a woman of remarkable moral integrity, yet he had seen her eloping with Grenfel, at least living on his yacht and under his protection, and, to his degenerate mind, this could be explained in but one way.

It was evident, then, argued this Yankee Machiavelli, that Grenfel possessed some charm of manner which he did not, and the assumption drove a poignard into the most vulnerable part of his armour, his pride, his conceit, and it was like salt on a wound. It roused him to fury when he permitted himself to think of it, nor could he drive it out of his opera-bouffe mentality. And so he walked, this clever Bombastes Furioso—this prince of the realistic extravaganza—walked and walked until the watch, which wanted to go to sleep, on deck, damned him up and down from bobstay to catheads and back again.

It was nearly morning when he turned in. The soft light from the cone of Vesuvius was shining like a great dull red Mars, and on the cloud above was reflected the lurid light of the eternal fires of this wound in the earth.

They passed Saeta, Valletri, and ran down through the Strait of Bonafacio, between Corsica and Sardinia, then across to Palamos on the Spanish coast, by places that the yacht might

naturally put in at, as Barcelona and Valencia; but the *Nœmie* kept on under press of sail, and Captain Garvie followed suit with his big topmast-staysail, fore- and main-gaff-topsails, a big jib topsail and flying jib, under which the yacht raced along through the blue waters at twelve or thirteen knots an hour.

They picked up the Grenfel yacht so quickly that it was evident they could outsail her with the wind on the quarter; so when they raised her hull, they took in the jib topsail and the big squaresail, and held her, until night, when Morley crowded on sail, with lights out, and pulled up to within a mile, so that they would not lose her in the darkness. There were scores of sails all about, great clumsy barques from Holland, a heavy coaler bound to coalless Italy, trim clippers running into Genoa and other French ports.

Now they overhauled a big lateen-rigged felucca, the richly-coloured sails standing out like daubs of red against the blue sky—some were deep red, others green, or brown, lending varied beauties to the scene. Away to the south the haze told of the African coast, and to the north the lands of the Riviera, its vineyards, groves of oranges, lemons and limes, reached away into the lofty peaks which capped the Pyrenees, which came tumbling down to the sea. So many sails dotted the horizon, that there was no reason why Grenfel should suspect that he was being

followed, yet, one day, he suddenly came about and ran for the African coast until hull down, and then, as Morley was about to give the order to follow, she came about and again took the course to the Atlantic and open water.

She came to anchor off Gibraltar in the morning, and Morley made a turn in and lay near by, and watched every boat that went ashore to see that Nœmie did not leave. But Grenfel's object was provisions and water, and, after two days, he made sail. Two hours later Morley followed suit, running along, wing and wing, with a Norway barque and a Spanish fisherman, almost alongside.

Morley did not underestimate the cleverness of his rival. He knew that the moment Grenfel suspected that he was being followed he would try to throw him off, and possibly this happened the next day, when the yacht made a long reach all day, in fact, to the northwest, and at sundown, about eight miles away, came about and headed in for the Spanish coast on the port tack. Such a manœuvre suggested heading up for Largos, north of Cape St. Vincent on the Portuguese coast. This also suggested England, but for some reason, possibly clever intuition, Morley did not believe this was her course, and at night he kept well off shore, under reduced sail, as it was thick, and early in the morning sighted the yacht, hull down, to the south. In ten minutes she would have been out of sight. She was bound

for America, and would doubtless touch at the Azores or Madeira, so Morley made his course nearer the African coast, and crowded on all sail, night and day, and, one morning, in light and velvet winds, ran into Funchal.

The yacht was nowhere to be seen and Morley began to doubt his judgment. His idea had been to run in ahead of her, and be at anchor when she arrived, to avoid any suspicion of following so early in the game; but there was a chance that Grenfel would not stop, or he might have gone to the Canaries. The cleverness of Morley's deduction was emphasised the following morning when the yacht was seen anchored, not a cable's length away, sails furled and awnings up, doubtless for a week's stay. At ten o'clock a boat was lowered, and soon came alongside, and Captain Belton of the *Nœmie,* of New Orleans, U. S. A., came over the side to pay his respects to the captain of the *Onorah,* of Boston. Captain Belton had evidently come aboard to see what could be seen as well, and was told that Mr. Garvie was owner and cruising. The stranger went below for cigars and a glass of Madeira, where Morley, lying in his berth in his stateroom, listened to the conversation.

"Bound home?" asked the newcomer.

"Yes," replied Garvie. "Whatever way takes my fancy—Bermuda or Bahama, perhaps, and so on."

Captain Belton may have been satisfied, but

he noted four or five big staterooms, and expressed the opinion that the owner had room enough for a big party.

"Yes. I brought over a party of friends," said Garvie, "and they left me at Naples. Too much salt water."

The captain of the *Nœmie* went over the side, but did not mention the presence of Grenfel or his companion, nor did Captain Garvie see them when he returned the call in the evening. The next morning the yacht was gone.

Morley raved like a madman at the dereliction of the watch, made sail at once, and the wind being from the southwest and heavy, he crowded on all the sail he dared, nearly ripping the masts out of her before noon. He laid his course for Nassau, believing that region to be the rendezvous of Grenfel. The next day it blew a gale, and the yacht flew along under close-reefed fore and mainsail, and a forestaysail, and, as it increased and a terrific sea picked up, they took in the mainsail and laid the yacht to under close-reefed foresail and storm staysail, during which Morley chafed and fumed like a caged lion, occasionally threshing his ugliness out on the men.

Sailors are, as a rule, superstitious, and, during the gale, they were fairly cowed by the weird phenomena of the sea, which was a blaze of light as far as the eye could see, an uncanny, terrifying spectacle. When a sea struck the yacht, it rose like a mass of blazing lava from the crater

of a volcano, and striking the yacht, ran down the shrouds, halyards and standing rigging, in gleaming rivulets to the sea. The stars flashed like steel facets in the clear, cloudless sky, seemingly reflected in the deep blue waters of the great vortex. All hands seemed fascinated, some terrified, by the weird spectacle.

Under the bow a great wave of fire broke, crumbled and ignited as it fell away. Strange flashes of luminosity appeared everywhere on the surface or just below it, while the caps of distant waves blazed and glowed as though there was something in the air which ignited when the waves leaped upward and broke in the laughter of the sea.

So vivid were the lights, that the rigging and the men cast huge shadows on the white sails, and the entire ship assumed a weird spectral and ghostly appearance. In the depths, near by, curious long barrel-shaped fire bodies, five or six feet in length, told of the pyrosoma, one of the splendid luminous animals of the sea, a community in which each faceted shape, each individual, blazed and scintillated with a marvellous light, now hidden, again igniting, spreading, racing away until the entire animal stood out in lines of fire against the ocean.

With it were countless small forms, meteors, shooting stars, comets, blazing their way in the depths, some at the surface, others dimly seen like distant constellations in the abysmal depths,

living suns and stars of this world beneath the sea. Every drop of this great ocean bore myriads of living lights, diatoms, infusorians, invisible to the naked eye, all adding to the splendour of the pageant, converting the surface of the water into creamy, golden masses of light. All night long the crew watched the mountains of fire, billows of flame, rolling on and on. Towards morning the storm broke, the sea dropped, the weary men got sail on the yacht, and she fell away on her course.

During the day, the ocean was often covered with weed, sargassum, in which lived countless strange animals, from crabs to fishes, the exact shade, tint and colour of the weed itself. Little black petrels followed them astern, crossing and recrossing the broad, white and blue wake—harbingers of good luck, while now and then dolphins dashed in and raced with them over the boundless sea, that, apparently a desert, was alive with countless forms of life.

The farther they went, the greater grew the mass of weed or sargassum, and about two weeks or so out, they ran into what seemed an interminable field of weed, the Sargasso Sea. The wind died to a semi-calm, the weather was hot and sultry. The great mass of sea-weed collected in the vortex was cut in every direction by openings or leads of deep blue, into which the yacht ran; but when she ran against the weed, it was more or less an impediment. Countless strange

animals lived in it, and, as far as the eye could reach, the surface was covered in patches by the deep yellow olive-hued leaves of sargassum, and for days they ploughed through it—days of often dead calms, with intermitting, soft and balmy winds.

One hundred dollars had been offered by Morley to the seaman who first sighted the *Nœmie,* and on the morning of the tenth day a tall, yellow-faced Portuguese, Mateo Sarera by name, sung out the welcome sound, "Sail—o-o-o!" and away to windward they made out the yacht. She had been favoured with better winds and had kept up with them.

Morley now began his old tactics. He kept away by day, and hauled nearer by night so that he could easily pick her up in the morning, and, by keeping in the lead, he manœuvred so that the *Nœmie* appeared to be following him.

For ten days he alternately lost and picked her up. One night at dusk a long low island hove in sight against the rich vermilion clouds into which the sun was dropping. Morley knew that the farce could not be kept up much longer, so he reduced sail and hauled into the wind to let the *Nœmie* pass, which she did at midnight, the moon being full, illuminating the ocean for miles.

They had made a little key off the east of Acklin Key, one of the Bahama group, a dangerous region, new to the captain of the *Onorah;* but Morley gave orders to follow the yacht at

all hazards. The latter was under a full press of sail, and it was blowing heavily, but she did not hesitate, plunging into what seemed to be a maze of keys and sand-banks. At about daylight Morley saw her gaff-topsails over an island four miles away.

A man was sent into the top to locate the channel, a most intricate one in what is known as the Mayaguana Passage, and Grenfel had run in behind some keys to the east of Acklin. She had not reduced sail, and the man in the top saw that she was winding in and out with skill and care, while his constant shouts of "Port!" "Hard starboard!" "Steady!" "Hard down!" only served to suggest that the chances of running aground were more than good. The danger soon became so apparent that Morley sailed out into the main passage and came to anchor in a bay to the north of Little Iguana Key, there losing sight of the yacht, which was still among the keys to the north.

In the morning it was blowing half a gale; but Morley got under way and ran across the passage and in among the keys. He worked his way in and out for half a day, and was in a narrow channel when the first officer gave a shout, and they saw the *Nœmie* under full sail, coming out of a little channel, not a cable's length away. She came on like a whirlwind, her sails full, a tower of white canvas, wore around and came directly down on the *Onorah*. Garvie

put his helm hard up to avoid a collision, and the next moment ran head on to a hidden reef, shooting the bow of the yacht high out of water.

As she did this, the *Nœmia* came up into the wind like a living thing, spilling the wind from her sails, everything shaking as she reached ahead into deep water, then fell away, wore around and came up, not one hundred feet from the *Onorah*. The men manned the jib downhauls, the anchor went clattering down, and on her deck was seen a crew of as wild a lot of men as one would want to see in a year's voyage.

In the space of about ten minutes, the *Onorah* had been virtually wrecked and the wreckers were lowering boats and coming aboard.

It did not require half an eye to see that the *Onorah* had been tricked, run ashore, and was to be wrecked and pillaged. Morley did not believe that Grenfel had any idea that he was on board, hence when the yacht ran on the reef and the wreckers were seen coming aboard, he concealed himself in a tall locker in the forecastle, having told the captain to carry out the old story.

In a few moments boatloads of men were alongside. With scant courtesy they wandered over the yacht, and the leader, a Bahaman Conch, told the captain he would "take him over yander" (ashore) "if he wanted to go."

"I prefer to stay aboard my ship."

"All right," said the man, with a grin. "She's

a total wrack. I'll be doggoned if you can ever get her off of this reef. She went on under a press of sail at flood tide, and you can walk ashore at the ebb. She'll go to pieces the first blow. We're going to wrack her, anyway."

The captain counted at least forty wreckers, sized up his own fifteen men, then gave in without wasting any words. The band began the dismemberment of the yacht, ripping off the sails, carrying off provisions and every object of value, and by four in the afternoon they began to chop away the masts, letting them go over the side, then hauled them ashore. By six they had her looted, and the Conch ordered everyone into the boats. "Get in or burn," he said, lighting a big bunch of oakum and tossing one flaming piece into the cabin, another into the forecastle. The last produced an immediate effect on Morley, who came up out of the blaze and smoke like a singed cat, at which the wreckers set up a roar of laughter.

"What are you hidin' down yander fo'?" said the big Conch. "You look too doggon fine and easy for a sailorman. Take this yere man over yander an' introduce him to Captain Foster. He must be a gentleman sailor, I reckon."

The man pushed Morley into the boat, and, in a few strokes, had him alongside the *Nœmie,* up whose side he went to find himself face to face with Colonel Grenfel, who stood for a mo-

ment a picture of genuine astonishment, which gradually melted into rage.

"So it is you who has been dogging me for the past month. I thought it was a peculiar coincidence that we should run across the same yacht so often; and all the time it was my dear friend Schuyler Morley"; and a sardonic smile broke over Grenfel's face, not particularly pleasant to contemplate.

Morley stood, hands in his pockets, singed, smelling of burnt oakum, looking at the giant a moment with sudden death in his eyes; then he said:

"Whom have I the honour of talking to—Colonel Grenfel, Captain Foster, or who?"

CHAPTER XXII

THE MAROONER

"Sit down, Morley; don't stand," said Grenfel.

"I can stand," replied Morley.

"Sit down," said Grenfel, "or I will knock you down as I did once before."

Morley did as he was told.

"Buddy," said Grenfel, turning to a Conch standing near, "search this fellow." The man went over Morley quickly.

"Nothing on him, sir, but a smell o' burnt oakum, sir."

"Very well. Keep your eye on him, and if he makes a move, just run him through with a pike."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the Conch, who, if appearances went for anything, looked as though he would relish the job.

"Now, Mr. Morley," said Grenfel, dropping into a canvas chair and lighting a Honaredez, "what do you want? You have been hunting me for a month or so. You have found me. What is it? Speak up!"

"You seem to have the upper hand," replied Morley.

"I generally have the upper hand with you, you scum of the earth," said Grenfel. "It's not much of a trick"—never taking his eyes away from the victim, who did not flinch, and who was wondering if he could, by any means, get Grenfel overboard and drown him, so malignant were his thoughts.

"What do you want with me, Schuyler Morley?" repeated Grenfel. "Out with it, or I'll put a bowline about your neck and run you up to the top."

Morley lost himself at this and, springing to his feet, was about to leap at his tormentor, who never moved, when something caught him by the back of the neck and jerked him backward on to the deck.

"Shall I run him through, sir?" said the tall Conch, who had so dextrously performed the feat and who had a pike in his hands.

"No," said Grenfel. "Just make him fast to the shrouds. Tie him up as you would a dog."

"I'll tell you what I am here for, you damned pirate!" shouted Morley, livid with rage, trying to shake his fist at the calm smoker. "I'm here to run you down, to find out who and what you are, and where you are carrying the wife of another man. You have Mrs. Duryea aboard as your——"

"Utter that word or any word reflecting on

that unhappy girl, and I will toss you into that fire," roared Grenfel, springing to his feet—a terrible figure—and pointing to the burning *Onorah*. "So you have taken it upon yourself to rescue the wife who wouldn't run away with you. Ah, you dog! Buck and gag him," shouted Grenfel, "and throw him down with the turtles, out of my sight, before I kill him. I don't want the blood of such a blackguard on my hands. All hands make sail!"

The men seized Morley, bucked and gagged him, despite the fight he put up, knocking several of them over, and threw him down on the deck with three or four big sighing green turtles. Then they made sail and got the yacht under way.

They pulled out of the little harbour, Grenfel at the helm, and sailed away among the scores of islands that make up this group, and, towards night, came to off a small key covered with low brush and not half a mile long.

At Grenfel's order, Morley was tossed into a boat with a hogshead of water and then rowed ashore. "Throw him out," ordered Grenfel, as the bow of the cutter crunched into the hot coral sand. "Toss the keg over and cut him loose."

"Morley, if I had given you what you deserve, I should have hung you, but, as I have said, I don't want the blood of such a blackguard as you on my soul. You want a chance to reform and to think. That water will last you a month, and you can live on crabs. If you can swim that

channel a quarter of a mile, you can get away, but you will be the only man, black or white, who ever got twenty feet before he was eaten by sharks. However, that ought not to trouble a man so persistent as you. Shove off, men."

The marooned man stood a moment, then, game to the last, he walked down to the water's edge and hurled a wild, incoherent defiance at the cool, impassive figure, which did not even turn or appear to listen. Presently Grenfel climbed aboard the *Nœmie,* which fell away before the fresh west wind, wing and wing, and was soon out of sight behind the keys.

For some time Morley raved and cursed his luck, working himself into such a passion that he became a virtual madman, raging up and down the white coral sands, grovelling in them, wading out into the water to curse the fast disappearing yacht, until, exhausted, he fell on the beach and lay for hours in a half stupor. The marooned man came to himself at night, and at first, desperate, did not think of life or escape. He knew that he was on a key, entirely out of the way of vessels, and that if found anywhere, even if he could escape, he might be shot by the wreckers. So he wandered on and on around the interminable beach, a human derelict, indeed. The sun was intensely hot, and he was finally driven to the water keg, to realise that when that was emptied the end would come unless he could find water.

He took a draught, ate some fruit of the prickly pear, which grew everywhere, and began to reassume his normal condition. Hope rose within him; perhaps he could still escape. So he began to examine the key. He found it half a mile long by a thousand feet across, covered with a variety of bay cedar and scattering patches of cactus, and about four feet above the sea.

He crossed the island in many places and found quantities of speckled gull's eggs, land crabs, and noddy gulls, and, on going around the island, numerous tracks leading up from the water, suggesting that turtles laid here, so the food question was settled. He had heard that wrecked mariners had been known to live on the moisture from cactus, and he determined to try it, hoping that it would be enough to last him for some weeks. So he rolled the cask up into the bush, and buried it away from the heat of the sun, as a last resort. Out from the key a shallow reef ran which abounded in crawfish, sea eggs, and various animals which live in coral lagoons. The nearest island was half a mile across the shark channel, and appeared to be twice as large. On the north beach, near the brush, he found the remains of a fire, suggesting that turtlers or wreckers came here sometimes. He could steal their boat, perhaps. All this gave him strength and hope, and he determined to fight it out and reach the north, where he would raise a force to smoke Grenfel out. It

began to rain one night, and he saw gallons of life-giving water running away, yet could not save a drop. In the morning he began to collect brush, which he piled up in a little clearing, intending to bind it together and make a protection from the rain. He wove the branches together and laid them in rows, planting one end, and soon had a corral ten feet across. On to these brush piles he set others, so raising it as high as his head, then formed a roof in the same way.

That night he turned a turtle and cut it up with a piece of barrel-hoop he found near the old fire, the only weapon he had. The following night it rained again and he soon found the turtle-shell full of water, suggesting reservoirs, so he began to hunt turtles, systematically, and every night killed or caught five or six, some green and some of the loggerhead variety. The meat he hung with masses of immature yellow eggs in the sun to dry, while the shells he fitted together as best he could and placed them on the brush roof to shed the rain and catch it. Surely necessity is the mother of invention, and the man who never had to raise a hand in his life found that, when starvation was the spur, many seeming impossibilities could be accomplished. Morley knew that the turtle season was short, so he devoted himself assiduously to the catch, and in two or three weeks had thirty or forty large turtle-shells arranged about his place,

which were often filled with water by the heavy squalls that burst upon the island. He had lived for two weeks on the water in the big leaves from the prickly pear, demonstrating that if worst came to worst, he could subsist on this. All this brought him back to his normal poise, and, though marooned, with but a piece of barrel-hoop, he began to scheme and dream dreams of conquest over his enemies, and of the attainment of his wishes.

As he had no means of making a fire, Morley ate his meat raw, after the fashion of his ancestors five or twenty thousand years before, and found that cooking was after all a fad. He made a flour of the immature turtle eggs by drying them in bunches in the sun and then grinding them up, and, when salted with the residuum of salt water in a big conch shell and with oil from the green callipee or fat of a turtle, it was food for the aboriginal gods.

One day in the water near the old fire embers, Morley found a big square glass bottle which at one time had held Hollands, and not far away another broken one. In half an hour, using a piece as a burning-glass in the fierce sun, he had a fire in the dry, crisp leaves of the bay cedar, and that day he had broiled green turtle steak, keeping the coals alive day after day with the quantity of drift which came ashore. The attempts to keep the wolf from his door—in this instance a particularly grim creature—diverted

the man's thoughts from himself, and he developed unusual skill in many strange directions.

To save his clothes, he did not wear them always, going about almost naked. He ran down the ghostly sand-crabs and succeeded in creeping upon various birds which roosted on the neck of the key. He made remarkable discoveries of strange animals, strange to him at least, in the sand, water and coral. By wading out on to the north shoal, he came to a barrier reef made of dead coral rocks, from the size of his head to five times that; he carried scores of them in and built them up around his house, and soon had a firm barricade, filling the interstices with the sticky coral mud from the reef. He made a fishing line from the fibre of the cactus, dried in the sun, a tedious piece of work, and a hook from the tip of a big conch, filing it out with his iron barrel-hoop, and with this caught all the fish he needed from the rocks, grunts, yellow-tails, groupers, and many more, while crawfish he took by stooping down or diving, seizing them by their long, serrated whips, and hauling them out. Indeed, this man who had been born to every luxury, wondered at the ease with which he supported himself by a mere return to nature or to the methods of the aborigines.

Some days in summer immense schools of cavally would come inshore, chasing sardines upon the beach, leaping out themselves in their wild, insatiate rush for prey and blood, and then

it was only necessary for him to wade in and toss them out.

In this way the marooned man sustained life for several months, during which time he never saw a sail. Gradually it came over him that he was on a key that might never again be visited by a human being, at least in his time, and then, enraged at his impotence, he would relax into despair.

Many times he waded out near the dreaded channel, and was often tempted to swim it, when an indistinct grey-tinted form, deep in its blue heart, or a sharp fin, cutting knife-like along the surface, discouraged him; so he reserved this as an easy suicide when he was ready to give up—but not yet, not yet.

For companionship he caught young gulls, pelicans and other birds, even turtles and crabs, and trained them, talked to them; and out of the furry breasts of the brown pelican he made himself a coat, sewing the pieces together with hemp thread which he made from the long leaf of a Spanish bayonet, using the sharp spine in the end as a needle.

The marooned man began to have fits of fierce elation, followed by days of despair and despondency, and one morning after a heavy gale, he believed he was stricken with a fatal illness. He awoke in the night with a raging fever, and, for the first time, realised that he might die alone, unaided, like a dog. The thought maddened him,

and as day came, he felt worse, and the idea that he had no paper, no pencil to leave a word, crazed him. He conceived the idea of using the thousands of small trochus shells and forming letters with them on some clearing, and so telling the story. He did this, spent days collecting shells, then arranged them in letters a foot long, writing his name. The next day the hermit crabs had entered and dragged off the "M" so that it was not distinguishable, and in the following week they broke up the entire name by stealing parts of the letters. The hermit crabs thought that the shells had been placed for their special benefit.

Then he laid coral stones on the sand in great letters, but the insidious sand obliterated it in a night, and again he was in despair. Finally a happy thought occurred. He had noticed that scars on the huge, imperishable leaves of the prickly pear cactus turned black and remained indefinitely. Why not write on them? But what should he write? Anything to bring the enemies of Grenfel on his trail. So, still ill with raging fever, he dragged himself along the sands and with a sharp stick wrote on a cactus leaf, "JOHN DURYEA, N. Y.—Nœmie imprisoned. Bahama Reef, near Acklin Key." This he repeated on leaf after leaf, where the cactus reached the shore, until he had written the call for help a hundred times and signed it—"MORLEY, marooned." Then, almost in delirium, he fell exhausted, lay under

the bush until night, when he crawled to his hut and for days was on the verge of utter collapse, half delirious, finally recovering—but for what?

While lying looking at the wall of his hut, he suddenly conceived a new scheme of escape. He would make innumerable bundles of brush, forming a great brush float, protect it with points of the Spanish bayonet, and paddle over the channel to the next key, and so on to liberty. The plan was so easy, so simple, that he wondered why he had not thought of it before, and as soon as he could work he began gathering branches, binding them together at the water's edge, interweaving the long, spiked points of the Spanish bayonet until he had an enormous ball, resembling a gigantic hedgehog. It required a week or two to complete this extraordinary armour against sharks. When it was ready, he dragged it out on to the reef to test it, crawled into the centre and lay in the water in what was virtually a huge bird's nest with six or eight feet of brush around him on all sides. Out of a timber that had been washed ashore he had made a rude oar, which he rigged in a scull hole, proposing to scull the cumbersome craft across while submerged in the nest-like centre.

Morley selected a day when the wind was blowing off shore, and the tide on the ebb, which would carry him up the channel, towed the clumsy object with much labour out into deep water, then clambered into it and began the voyage.

His weight sank the brush much lower than he expected, so that the water flowed completely over it, but he lay flat on his back and worked the cumbersome scull as well as he could. He noted that he was moving out beyond the reef, where the current caught the mass and bore it slowly toward the blue water of the channel, that, like a pulsating artery, wound its way through the shallows of the keys. So cumbersome was the submerged mass, the more it became soaked the deeper it settled, and Morley soon realised that he was moving up the channel and not ahead. Then the fear that he might drift out to sea took possession of him, and he worked madly at the oar, noting all the time that his craft was sinking lower and lower, until the thought that perhaps it would sink entirely seized him and became a living horror.

The tremendous exertion of sculling exhausted him, and, as he lay staring over the edge of the nest, he saw the tall fin of a shark coming down the channel. It had a peculiar fascination to the man, as its movements were like those of a hound on a fresh scent. The graceful, sinuous motion increased in rapidity as it came nearer and nearer. He could see the screw-like motion of the tan-coloured fin, the little mass of foam in front of it, preceded by a ripple. Then the fin disappeared and he felt a strange trembling of the nest below him, and the water boiled up around the edge as though some huge cauldron

was bubbling and hissing below. "God in heaven! could man stand such horror?" thought this terrible figure, crouching, trembling, glancing with wild, bulging eyes. He dared not move, glancing fearfully from side to side, grasping the big clumsy oar, yet fearing to move it lest it attract attention.

The weird boiling of the water increased; now it was all about him, then suddenly the big sodden nest tipped as though some heavy object had pressed down upon it, recovering so slowly that the crazed, hunted figure of a man believed it going down and screamed aloud in mortal, unearthly agony.

He pulled himself as far to the other side as he could, screaming as big tan-coloured forms swirled about on the surface. Crouching, peering over the edge with furtive, awful glances, this horrible apology of a man seemed about to leap, hands gripping the bundles of wood like claws, and all the time the sodden nest sank lower. A long striped shape shot out of the water, over the edge, not three feet from the man, whose screams rent the air; then came a familiar sound:

"Give way hard, lads!" and the crew of the revenue cutter *Dart* sent their boat up on to the crazy balsa as it sank, and the bow oarsman jerked a madman into the boat, fighting off the tiger sharks and a dozen or more lesser hounds of the sea with boat-hook and oar.

CHAPTER XXIII

NŒMIE

THE U. S. revenue cutter *Dart,* a brig of 100 tons, had been ordered to make a survey of the Bahama reef. By pure accident the captain had sent a boat down the little channel between the keys, and so had stumbled upon the singular balsa-like structure built and launched by Morley.

They lashed the ever-screaming man to the seat and pulled in to the beach of the adjacent key, thinking to find out who he was, as he appeared stark mad. The men soon found his hut and learnt the dismal story, and in front of it on the sand in letters a foot long, made of small, bleached echini, so common on the beach, read the name, "Schuyler Morley, New York," that the marooned man had made but the day before.

Some of the men began to pick the rich, purple prickly pears which covered the cactus, and one, the naturalist of the party, noticed the writing and called the men, who came running. Then others were found, and all read the message:

"JOHN DURYEA, N. Y.—Nœmie imprisoned. Bahama Reef, near Acklin Key.—MORLEY, marooned."

Two months later the brig returned to Key West and the captain made his report to Washington of finding a supposed American, name given, who died a few days later, violently insane. He included the address, also a copy of the message on the cactus, and the naturalist sent a leaf in alcohol with his specimens to the Smithsonian Institution. The authorities forwarded the message to John Duryea, New York, and, as a result, Duryea immediately sailed for Key West. With him went orders to the cutter from the Department to go to the location and make a thorough investigation to see if other American citizens were wrecked and living on these isolated islands; and so it happened that John Duryea landed one day at the marooned man's key, and tried to fathom the mystery which had resulted in the death of his friend. He knew nothing of the inroad upon his honour that Morley had attempted, and as to Nœmie, Grenfel had never mentioned his share in it to anyone, neither had anything ever occurred to connect Grenfel with Nœmie's flight. He had it from Toussaint that Nœmie had gone to Europe with her friend, Sister Mary, and, despite all his efforts, he could not trace her beyond Naples, nor could he learn anything about the yacht or her owners. It

looked very strange to him. The mystery of Nœmie's movements might have aroused a suspicion in the minds of many men, but Duryea was of another build. He was so sure of the purity of character of his wife that he never permitted a thought unjust to her to enter his mind. She had been driven away from him heartbroken, by a train of extraordinary circumstances, and he proposed to find her and explain it away. Learning that Morley had been marooned, he conceived the idea that in some way Nœmie had been wrecked, and was in need of help; that she was imprisoned was the raving of a madman.

After a careful examination of the key, they began to visit others, checking them off upon the chart, and for weeks spent the time walking over the hot and dreary keys which make up the maze of reefs and islands known originally as the Lucayas, from the original natives who made their home there in past ages and up to 1500.

The party examined Guanahani, called at Turk, Caicos, Abaco, Mayaguana and many more, and, as the group covered a distance of nearly eight hundred square miles, six degrees of latitude and more of longitude, it was a herculean task which soon became appalling.

There were hundreds of keys which could only be reached in small boats. Many of the islands were inhabited by Conchs, wreckers and fishermen, and by runaway slaves, who were rounded up occasionally with great barbarity by their

masters from Nassau, Cuba, and Porto Rico. No one among the scores interviewed had heard of a man marooned on a key, and doubtless would not confess if they had. An old fisherman who had lived in the keys for years, said that it would be impossible for a woman to be kept there against her will. The captain of the cutter, who did not relish the service in hot weather, and who considered it a wild-goose chase, called Duryea's attention to the fact that the man they had found, supposed to be Morley, was a maniac, and if he had been insane or partly so for some time, his wrecked mind might have imagined the situation, and the chances were that he did.

But Duryea continued the work. He took no chances; but after weeks of the most arduous search over trackless sands, in intolerable heat, through brush that was suffocating, Duryea began to lose courage. He found it impossible, and the theory that he was following the dream of a madman seemed more and more plausible.

One afternoon, when they had reached a long line of keys, extending south and west along the "Crooked Passage" into the old Bahama Channel, the glass began to drop, suggesting a gale, and they ran into a little bay where there was a lee, and made everything snug for a blow.

Duryea was discouraged, but seeing a lot of sea-birds, he took a gun and was put ashore, telling the captain that he would take a look over the island and bring back some curlew

and snipe for supper. The key was like others of the group, just on the surface, covered with brush, with here and there a pau-pau or tamarind, or a palm or cocoanut, brought from the mainland long ago. Coming to an opening in the brush, Duryea, hoping to find a way to the windward side where the birds were more plentiful, pushed in, wading slowly over the soft coral sands, now turning to avoid cactus patches or bunches of bayonet, winding in and out, watching the big red-backed land crabs climbing bushes and clinging to the nests of the noddies. The heat was intense and sultry, and overhead, against the deep blue of the sky, great man-of-war birds hung, balanced in the air, harbingers of storm. It was thickening in the west, and already low, dark, menacing clouds were flying over the sky.

Seeing the tops of some palms, some distance ahead, and thinking he might find a fisherman's hut, Duryea hurried on, and when the surf began to sound distinctly he came suddenly upon a little clearing, in the centre of which was the wreck of an old ship, high and dry, her bow out of the water for fifty feet, her stern gradually disappearing into the sand, which led down into a little land-locked cove, formed by a peculiar spit of the reef.

Duryea stopped, astonished at the sight. There were several things to attract his attention. The figure-head of the ship was a colossal

Neptune, but had for some reason been kept up, and was gilded in fresh tones of red gold-leaf from feet to crown, a dazzling spectacle. In the immediate vicinity were several other figure-heads—beautiful women, mermaids and mermen—stationed around, either gilded or gorgeously painted, so that one might have imagined that they were the tutelary gods of some lover of the sea. The fore deck of the wreck had been patched up with the parts of many vessels; the upper deck and pilot house of a steamer joined an observatory and piazza, and the single mast standing was reeved with halyards, doubtless for a signal station of some kind.

A steep ladder led up to a companionway. With gun across his arm, Duryea walked up and knocked at the door which was used for the purpose. No one answered, so he pushed it open and walked in. The deck of another vessel had been used in some way for the floor, so that it was level. Duryea stopped in blank amazement at what he saw. The floors were covered with rare rugs from Persia and the Orient. The walls were hung with silks and tapestry, and from the ceiling hung a splendid French glass chandelier, intended, doubtless, for some palace. In a corner stood a large harp and various musical instruments, while on a table were books, a heavy Florentine cut-glass tantalus filled with liqueur. Against the tapestry were splendid paintings of the Old World masters, mirrors of Claude

Lorraine; indeed, the interior of this old wreck seemed designed to dazzle the beholder, and might have been a museum whose owner had ransacked the world.

Duryea stood, hat and gun in hand, staring about, when he heard a rustle behind him. He turned quickly and saw standing in a doorway, holding aside a velvet portière, Nœmie! She seemed to be dazed, bewildered, frightened as though she had seen a ghost, and for a second he too stood bereft of motion; then with a cry of joy, he sprang to her, and had her in his arms. "Speak, Nœmie! speak to me!" he cried, as a deathly pallour swept over her face and she almost fainted in his arms.

"In God's name, speak to me, Nœmie!" he repeated. In a moment she opened her eyes, her head fell upon his breast, and welcome tears—tears of joy—relieved her aching heart.

Duryea did not try to talk to her, but rocked her in his arms as old Toussaint did and held her to his heart, and in silence thanked God again and again.

At last she spoke.

"And you love me still?"

"I never stopped loving you, dearest. Never!" and then with his strong arm around her, he told her the story of mistakes and cruel wrongs.

"But how did you come here, Nœmie?" he asked. "Who is the magician who provides you with a palace in an old wreck?"

"My dear father," replied Nœmie.

"Your father!" exclaimed Duryea. "Your father! Why, Toussaint is at my house in New York, anxiously awaiting news from you."

"He is my foster-father," said Nœmie. "Colonel Grenfel is my own father. He placed me in Toussaint's hands when I was a little girl and bade him bring me up as his own, but supplied Toussaint with money to educate me, and always kept in touch with him."

"It was always a puzzle to me," said Duryea, "how Toussaint could be your father; but he was always insisting that you did not take after him, but after your mother. Good old Toussaint!"

"Do you remember when I met Colonel Grenfel and he saw my locket and the coat-of-arms?" asked Nœmie. "It was one he gave my mother and he knew at once that I was his daughter, and, in a few days, proved it by hearing from Toussaint, who had a priest write to him that I had married you; and when my troubles began, my dear father came to my aid.

"I was overwhelmed, dearest," said Nœmie, taking his hand. "So many terrible things happened, and when your mother, doubtless with the very best intentions, told me that I must not go to you, must not tell you, because you would kill Pierre and it would disgrace your name and make you a murderer, I made up my mind that you had wearied of me, because, dearest, I was

not like the women you knew, and had lived all my life in the woods. I was, in fact, a girl from the country—from the wilderness."

"And that is just why I married you," cried Duryea; "because you were different. And you really thought I was tired of you?"

"Yes," said Nœmie. "I thought you would be happier if I were away, but I see now there were too many advisers about us."

"It's all over, thank God!" said Duryea, pressing her to his heart, and looking down into the sweet violet eyes.

"All over," said Nœmie. "We will begin again.

"As soon as I got home, Toussaint wrote to my real father and he came up the river in his yacht, anchored at the entrance of the river, and came up to the lodge. There he told me that he was my own dear father, and for certain reasons, best known to himself, he had done as he had. He requested me to come back to him. He was very much incensed at my experiences, as he knew more about it than did you. Schuyler Morley insulted me one night, my father saw him and knocked him down and told him never to come there again."

"Upon my soul!" said Duryea, flushing; "there were indeed a lot of things going on in my house that I never knew of."

"I didn't tell you, dearest. I knew it would make you unhappy," said Nœmie.

"Ah, there is where you made your one mistake, sweetheart. Your loving heart in trying to save me prevented me from protecting you, which is the man's right and duty; but I see how you did it—to save me."

"I won't save you any more," said Nœmie, with a smile. "You can fight the battles and I won't run."

"But there are to be no more battles," said Duryea. "It is peace, peace, with all the world, or an armed neutrality."

"My father insisted upon my going to Europe for a year," continued Nœmie. "So I went with Sister Mary and he joined us, and introduced me as his daughter. At Naples, where I had promised to sing for the convent, I saw you. My father was in the wings, and when I told him he insisted upon leaving at once, as he thought you had neglected me. I did not want to go. I wanted to see you, but he insisted. He said, dearest, that about a year of thinking would bring you to your senses."

"A wise man," laughed Duryea. "A true prophet."

"Then we went aboard the yacht and sailed for home, and all the way a yacht followed us. I thought it was you, but father told me no."

"Did he tell you who it was?" asked Duryea.

"No," replied Nœmie.

"It was Morley."

"Morley!" cried Nœmie, paling, hiding her

face upon his breast as though to shut out the remembrance.

"Yes, Morley. But he is dead. He went insane. Let us believe that he always was mad. So this is your father's home?"

"Yes," said Nœmie. "My father is a strange man. I have not asked him why, but here he is known simply as Captain Foster, and lives with a few men. He is a pilot. They call him the pilot of Riker's Reef. He has had some great sorrow, John, dearest, some embittering, heart-breaking sorrow that at times drives him to desperate deeds of fierce heroism. He told me if I would live with him a year, he would then return to New York, if I wished, and, as he put it, 'resume negotiations.'"

Duryea laughed his old laugh. "Well, *I have* resumed negotiations."

They had not noticed a big shadow that reached across the floor from the door, but something made Duryea turn, and he looked into the grim face of Colonel Grenfel.

"You certainly *have* resumed negotiations," he said. "Nœmie, are you happy, or is this visit an intrusion?" and the deep eyes of the man gleamed and seemed to flash with hidden fire.

The two, startled, had risen, and Nœmie had her arm about her husband. The answer was in her eyes.

"You are welcome, Mr. Duryea," said Grenfel, smiling, "as you are welcome to my daughter.

If you please," he said, raising his hand as Duryea began to explain, "I know all about it. Don't say a word. Let the dead past bury its dead. I watched you for a long time, Duryea, when you were in your own home, before my daughter knew who I was, and your only crime has been the usual one of husbands—just a little negligent of the one you love the best—and I fancied that a little separation would bring you to yourself. God knows, I know nothing about women, but no man has a right to marry a woman like that," and he smiled a wealth of love and affection at the beautiful picture, still with her arm about her husband, "unless he is prepared to protect her from the wolves of society and the world. But I am not a preacher, Duryea. Welcome! a hearty welcome!" and he extended his hand to his son-in-law. "Cigars in the box—damp or dry?—and what shall it be to the lady's health? —Madeira or Hollands? Eh, what's this, what's this?" and Nœmie was in the wrecker's arms, sobbing tears of joy and gladness at the goodness of God to her, to her husband, and to all the world, while Duryea—well, Duryea strolled over and looked at the big golden harp, and thought of the line from the Bible he had heard an old negro preacher use as a text on one of the keys at a revival the week before:

"And he played upon a harp of a thousand strings; spirits of just men made perfect."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PILOT OF RIKER'S REEF

NIGHT had stolen on—a wild night anywhere, and wild indeed on the Bahama reef. Foster, or Grenfel, had sent one of his men over to the cutter with word that Duryea would stay with him, and Duryea sent a note to the skipper that the quest was ended, begging him to come over in the morning.

Another curtain was drawn aside and an ancient coloured woman, Aunt Eliza, with a turban of heroic proportions and huge earrings of hoops of gold, announced the tea; and Nœmie, a distracting picture, sat behind the solid gold and ivory service with its blazoned arms she had seen several years ago at Ball & Black's; and on Grenfel's right sat the guest, whose eyes would wander to the figure behind the golden service, and who marvelled at the solid gold spoons and knives and wealth of golden plate brought in and carried out on this strange wreck on Riker's Reef.

Then they toasted the lady, and again and

again, and talked of Toussaint and wished for him, and Grenfel told stories of him when they were boys, how Toussaint was the son of one of his father's French gamekeepers and had been his playmate as a boy, his gamekeeper as a man, and, best of all, the keeper of his little girl. As they talked, the gale was constantly increasing in force and the halyards on the mast whipped and rattled and the roar of the distant sea came like a menace of disaster.

The wind whistled about the crazy craft, roared beneath the deck, whisked about the old pilot house with loud, scream-like moans, which seemed borne away through the air against their will. The sand rose, was whirled into the air and rattled against the glass, while the tall palms bowed, the leaves lashing them, like penitentes. Occasionally the wild cry of laughing gulls could be heard as they were swept away, and small sea-birds came crashing against the wire screening, and fell dead and mutilated. Grenfel paced the floor, smoking, occasionally going out to look at the glass, and, as the wind increased, he put on an oilskin coat and went down the sands to see how it was with his men, whose hut was in an exposed place.

"The glass is dropping all the time," he reported as he came in. "I am afraid we're in for a hurricane. It's blowing one now. God keep all men off shore to-night."

The wind increased, now coming in wild gusts,

shrieking about the wreck, hurling great masses of spume at it, blown bodily from the sea. It would go down and all that could be heard would be the distant roar of maddened waters, ominous, foreboding; then the wind would be heard seemingly far at sea, rising, coming on, growing stronger and bolder, until, with a scream of rage, it seemed hurled at the old wreck like some maddened incarnate thing, to go raging off over reef or shoal and key, to be lost in the distance far away.

The water rose, blown on by the wind, lapped and broke against the ship, surged around it. All night Grenfel paced the floor; the elemental furies seemed to excite him. He could not sleep, but near daylight he threw himself down upon a couch, where Duryea found him.

Someone was shouting and pounding on the door, but hardly heard, so heavy was the roar of the wild sea. Duryea opened it and went out, fighting against the wind, and found two tall powerful-looking figures in oilskins. One of them came up and screamed in his ear:

"Tell Bob Foster there's trouble on the reef, will you, boss?"

At this moment Grenfel appeared, pulling on an oilskin jacket as he came. "Aye, lads!" he cried, his big voice mounting the gale.

"Ship off the reef!" screamed the tallest of the men, and they turned and struggled down the beach, followed by Duryea. They presently came

to a point beyond which they could see the full stretch of the reef—an appalling spectacle. Directly off shore was a lagoon about half a mile across, of shallow water, and beyond this a barrier reef, a coral breakwater, rose almost to the surface, and stretched away for three miles, and doubtless many more, forming the barrier for many keys to the north and south. Against this the sea was beating with a terrific roar, and a wall of perpetual spume hung over it—a splendid yet appalling spectacle.

As the men stopped to look, the sound of a gun was heard coming down the wind, and Pinckney, one of the men, the tallest, caught sight of the ship, her topgallant-yards showing over the reef, her bellying close-reefed maintopsail and storm staysail gleaming white against the jet-black cloud mass which hugged the horizon.

"She's in trouble trying to beat off the reef, I reckon, but she can't make it, and don't know how to come in. It's a job for us, lads," and Grenfel ran up the beach, and tore a beating sail-cloth from a small model of a life-boat of galvanised iron.

"You are not going out in such a storm as this, father?" said Nœmie, taking him by the arm. The wind had beaten her hair loose, and it was snapping like a whip, beating her shoulders and face.

"Why, girl," screamed Grenfel, "you wouldn't have me stand by and see good men beaten to

death on the reef. We've been out in worse gales than this—eh, Bill?"

"That we have," said the tall man, his red face standing out in strong relief. "This ain't nothin', miss."

"But, father, this is a hurricane. You can never make it—never!" and she looked at the awful sea, terror-stricken.

"That's what we're here for," screamed her father. "Pilots take things as they come. Take her up to the house and run up the flag to the peak. That will let them know we have seen them," shouted Grenfel to Duryea.

"Can't I go with you?" said the latter.

"No," said the pilot. "You take care of her. There's only room in the boat for three. It's all right. She can't sink."

Duryea took Nœmie under his coat and forced her along the beach, fighting every foot against the wind, buffeted by wraiths, walls and columns of sand.

The three men ran the light boat down to the water's edge. Grenfel and Pinckney leaped in and took an oar apiece, while Bill Dowden steadied her. As a big wave came rolling in he gave a surge ahead, leaped in as the oars, with powerful strokes, struck the water, and with a third oar began to guide her over the seas, which appeared, even to these experienced and hardened men, mountains high. The boat rose over them, standing almost end on end, and Duryea hurried

Nœmie along the sand that she might not see the sight and the possible catastrophe.

He hoisted the flag according to instructions, and for a few moments watched it tremble and blow upward, as flags do as long as they live, in a hurricane, then mounted to the house to watch the ship, which was almost a mile off shore and heading well up into the wind, but evidently not making any headway; in a word, she was drifting in.

On nearly all the reefs of the Gulf and its vicinity, there are certain passages, runs or small channels, known only to the pilots and wreckers. In a storm they cannot be distinguished, as the entire barrier reef is a mass of foam, but to the pilot who has his marks ashore, it is a comparatively easy trick to bring a large vessel through some of them, if the run is before the wind.

For such a channel the men were making, and, as they neared it, it seemed beyond human possibility to send a boat through; but these rowers were not ordinary men. They were superhuman types—giants of their age—men of oak, with hearts of steel, men who never stopped to think of life or the chance, when a human life could be saved. In a word, types of the old pilots of the best class who lived along that graveyard of ships, the Florida Reef, forty, fifty, or even seventy years ago.

By hard pulling they reached the channel and

lay by for a few moments; then, as there came a lull, punctuated by the booming of a distant gun, Bill shouted: "Let her go!" The oars struck the water like flashes of light, the lifeboat sprang at the breach like a bird, a wave climbed up its steep front, fell into a seemingly bottomless chasm, then she rose on a small stretch of fairly level foaming water and seemed to fly away, while the foam and spume shut them out as it was flung along the surface, torn from the tops of waves. Several times the boat was almost thrown completely over backwards by the force of the sea, but by a miracle she held on, climbing the mountains of the sea, and slowly gaining an opening in the direction of the ship, which drifted slowly down upon them. Several times the men changed oars, fighting against impossibilities, but eventually they reached a spot near the vessel and saw her to be a full-rigged clipper ship of at least 2,000 tons burden, her sides port-marked black and white to give her the appearance of a frigate. She was heeling over badly, and pitching so that when she dropped astern, her flying jibboom stood up like a mizzenmast. She presented a splendid spectacle, as all big ships do, everything snug, her rigging, shrouds, stays, lifts and braces all bellied to port, and the wind howling, moaning through them like a babel of weird voices. Yet to the men in the boat she was a haunted, stricken

thing doomed to disaster, unless they could board her.

By desperate efforts, which almost wore them out, they reached her lee, but did not dare to run alongside, as she was pitching and rolling, throwing mountains of water into the air. So they hung on the quarter until a rope was reeved through a block on the end of the spanker-boom and thrown to them and finally caught and made fast; by it they slowly pulled up.

It was a most difficult feat, as, when she pitched, to hold on would be to have the boat lifted into the air and the men thrown out. So they waited, slackened away when she rose, and waited the chance; then as her stern went up, Grenfel began to go up, hand over hand, and, reaching the boom, crawled on board over the foot-rope, while the boat cast off and the men turned in before the sea and soon disappeared.

"You're a brave man, pilot," screamed the captain. "A braver struggle I never witnessed. This is the ship *Mira Monte* from New Orleans to Cadiz. We sprung a leak and don't know this passage, and I imagine we're on a bad lee shore. Can you get us in?"

"I'll try," said Grenfel, looking aloft. "There's a chance of putting her through the Hogfish Channel we came out of. You can't make the point. She won't stand anything more on the wind, I don't believe."

"All right," shouted the skipper. "Take the ship, sir."

Grenfel stepped forward to give the course to the man at the wheel, when he caught a glimpse of a dozen or more faces of frightened men and women passengers looking up over the combing of the companionway, some coming out, several reaching the deck. Among them was a tall, distinguished-looking man of military figure. He looked at the pilot, and over his face came an ashy shade that paled to purest white. Men might drop dead a thousand times and never look like that, never show such dreadful fear in sunken eyes, never age so quickly, as though the very hand of Time had fallen heavily upon them. Grenfel caught the face, looked into it a second, then, with a roar of fury that rose above the gale, leaped for the man, seized him by the throat and ground him, twisted him down upon the deck, while the frightened group fell away.

"What in hell does this mean?" screamed the captain, leaping upon Grenfel. "Tear this fellow away here—quick!" and three men hurled themselves into the mêlée and tore the limp white figure from the madman.

"What does this mean?" yelled the captain, shaking an iron belaying-pin in Grenfel's face. "Are you mad?"

"Ask that dog," cried Grenfel, his face distorted with awful passion—passion of murder, passion of sudden death.

"Take him below," cried the captain, and they hustled the wounded, half-strangled man down the companionway. "And you," he said; "are you going to take this ship in or not? If you have any grudge against that man, settle it somewhere else."

"Grudge against that man!" said Grenfel. "Grudge, did you say? Justice! But you're right. I beg your pardon, captain, this is no place to settle personal questions. Man the forebraces!" he shouted. "Break out the foresail! Get the forestaysail on her!" The boatswain screamed the orders to the men.

"Hard port!"

"Hard port, sir!" The two men worked the wheel over, and the ship gradually fell away before the wind and gathered way.

The fore and main clewlines and buntlines were slacked, the men manned the halyards, and the big booms went creaking up and filled with wind with a report like the discharge of a cannon, then were sheeted home, and, catching the gale, seemed to almost lift the big ship out of the water into the air.

"If you think she'll stand the mainsail get it on to her. I want to send her through under all the press of canvas I can—all she'll stand," and Grenfel sprang into the weather mizzen-shrouds and gave his orders. He presented a strange spectacle. His shirt had literally blown away about his neck, or he had wrenched it away him-

self, and his mighty arms and muscles stood out like the limbs of a tree. His hat was gone, his short, curly, grey hair matted and beaten down; his red face, over which great, dark veins stood out, giving him a demoniacal appearance. Something gripped him at the throat and he tore away his handkerchief and bent his eyes upon the distant reef.

"Starboard!"

"Starboard, sir!"

"Steady!"

"Steady, sir!"

"Mainsail ready?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" screamed the mate.

"Give it to her, then! Break it out!"

The men hauled as the wind caught the great sail, and they watched the masts, expecting that they would go by the board; but the ship gave a strange shudder, careened over until her main-yard touched the water, then a tremendous sea came down astern and sent her flying on to the reef, the men on deck looking at it in blank terror. Men have been known to go mad at the spectacle of awful seas, and this vision of seeming certain death, of mountains of water racing down upon them from astern, almost drove them mad. They were even now in the backwater, where the great seas struck the reef and came rushing back to meet incoming billows and to leap into the air.

There was no trace of opening or channel, and

the men made a rush astern, just as the captain, recognising that something was wrong, sprang into the mizzen rigging. The pilot had turned his face to the companionway, where the passengers were again crowding, as the word had been passed: "All hands on deck." Some clung to life-preservers, some striking others, and he caught a glimpse of one white face, and with a laugh that rose above the wild roar of the waves and wind, he pointed at the sea.

Grenfel's eyes were staring, bursting from his head. He was plainly a madman, and the captain, seeing it, screamed: "Hard aport!" but it was too late. A big sea came rolling in, a tidal monster of a size rarely seen on the ocean; the undertow seemed to draw the water back until the terror-stricken crew could see the bare, jagged rocks of the reef rolling over and over, on to which the fated ship fell with a crunching, groaning sound; then the big, green, racing sea, just breaking, struck her. A cry of despair from a score of throats, and the ship was tossed like a chip, end over end, and dragged back and forth until she lost all semblance of form or shape. Some sea monster might have chewed her into a shapeless mass and spat her out, piece by piece, to be washed in and scattered, the flotsam and jetsam of the reef.

Those on shore watched every move and could not understand how Grenfel had missed the channel, and but two men, the captain and pale-faced

passenger, ever knew that the *Mira Monte*, with all her crew and passengers, was deliberately run upon the teeth of Riker's Reef to accomplish the death of one man.

Chance and luck have cheated Davy Jones of many victims, and among the wreckage that came piling in in great ground-up masses, were but two men alive. One was Grenfel; the other, the man he had attempted to throttle; but both were evidently stricken with death. They were carried in and given such restoratives as the ship afforded, and a few hours later Grenfel slowly and gradually recovered and called for Nœmie; but she had his hand, had never left him from the time they picked him up.

"Father," she said, "there is a passenger, a dying man, who has asked to see you, if alive. His name is Graham. He has something of great importance to tell you." Grenfel nodded, and they lifted the cot and carried him into the next room, where the man lay. His face was bloodless, the sweat of death seemed to be on his brow, and deep shadows were gathering on his face. Bill Dowden had given him a drink of brandy, forcing it between his teeth; but even then he could not look at Grenfel, and turned his face away from the dreadful, eager, killing eyes of the wrecker.

"Rodger Grenfel," he said, as Dowden lifted him up, "I am dying. I have but a few moments to live, and, as a dying man, I wish to tell you

that while I deeply wronged you years ago by suggesting an elopement with your wife, she never disgraced you—she never dishonoured you."

Nœmie dropped her head upon her father's breast and he placed his hand upon it.

"She intended to go to America and there obtain a divorce from you. I went to Italy and was not to join her until then, and this was carried out. Lift me up—lift me up. I must tell this, in God's name," said the dying man.

"This is true, as I hope for heaven. I never saw her again. She repented our rash attempt and I never saw her again. I heard that she joined her brother, who was a sailor, and sailed for several years with him. He was the captain of the *Adelaide,* which was found at sea mysteriously deserted, and the cause of her loss, the fate of the crew, never explained. That she was on this ship I know, as her clothes were found in a stateroom, and her brother was the captain. In a box was found this picture"—pointing to his neck. Dowden lifted him and took off a chamois bag, which he handed to Nœmie. "The picture was found in her stateroom. It had my name in it and was sent to me by the captain of the ship *Daniel Kelton,* who found it."

Nœmie opened it, and gazed for a moment at a beautiful face, the image of her own, and a

little girl, herself. She held it before Grenfel, and his hand closed over it.

As the dying man made this revelation, Grenfel slowly raised himself up and looked at him, and as he concluded, he said:

"You ruined my life, Arthur Graham. You struck me down from behind. More, you made of a man, who believed he was a Christian, an incarnate fiend, a wanderer over the earth, searching for revenge. You forced me to suspect the parentage of my innocent daughter, and send her away to be brought up by a servant. You forced me, to forget my sorrow and disgrace, to rush into a life of fierce deeds. You have created a demon, you have destroyed a life, and at its ending you have made me the murderer of innocent lives that I might blot *you* out of existence, and give you, at the end, one hour of awful terror, a terror worse than death. I have followed you all these years, understanding you were on the sea a greater part of the time, and I have often wondered what kind of a finish to give you. When I saw your face on deck, I saw that I had the opportunity to give you the most awful of ends, and I was only afraid that you would die of fright before she struck; and yet, after all this, you ask me to forgive you. My God! *you* ask me to forgive you!"

The wrecker stopped, looked at his daughter, felt the pressure of her hand, and continued: "You have raised a dull weight from my heart,

from my daughter's name, I hope. I feel it. I forgive you, Graham, and God help you!"

Graham smiled, tried to raise his hand, as a terrible blast struck the wreck, which shook it from stem to stern, and, as it went howling, screaming on, it bore a human soul out over the seas of eternity.

By a miracle Grenfel recovered, his herculean strength and physical powers aided him, but it was months before he could move, being almost paralysed. When he recovered sufficiently to go out, he was a broken man, and they saw that his mind was affected; but he lived on like a little child. Duryea took them all to New York, and in the early spring they went up into the Canadas, and one day a line of ponies walked into a certain camp, and Toussaint—a little redder, a little greyer—came running out. He took Nœmie in his arms and carried her in, and when Duryea came, he saw her on her knees before the little silver crucifix in her old room, thanking the good God for that which was hers by His goodness.

After several years Rodger Grenfel died, and his grandson, Rodger Grenfel Duryea, succeeded to an English title and a valuable estate; and as he grew, Toussaint taught him to fish for sea trout and then for salmon, and Nœmie showed him the beauties of the blue colours in the deep cañons of the Laurentides, as she wandered hand in hand with him and her husband. And sometimes

during the summer, a very large man, Father Aloysius, would come and bring a friend and Franciscan brother, Father Pierre Lovièr, and the three would wade the streams and cast the pools for salmon; and one year, long after, Duryea brought the great portrait painter, Arthur Kingsley Throckmorton, who was to paint a little boy, and, while he did, he told him wonderful tales, and the one he liked the best of all was about a little boy, cold and hungry, who saw a big sailorman get off a ship in the middle of a street, during a snow storm, and then his mother would always say: "And the sailor was your dear grandfather, sweetheart."

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